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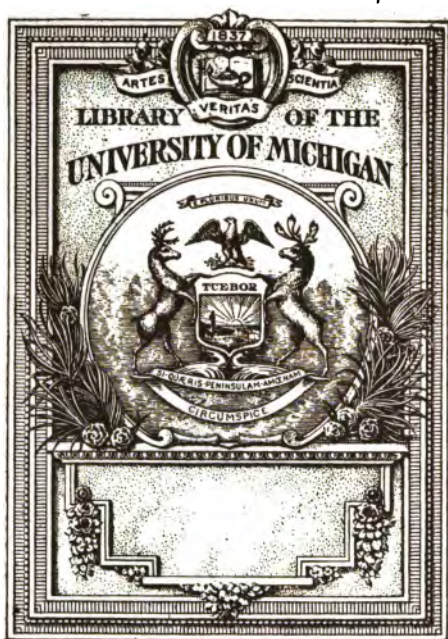
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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
CHRISTOPHER KIRKLAND.

BY

MRS. LYNN LINTON,

AUTHOR OF

'THE TRUE HISTORY OF JOSHUA DAVIDSON,' 'PATRICIA KEMBALL,'  
'THE ATONEMENT OF LEAM DUNDAS,' 'UNDER WHICH  
LORD?' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

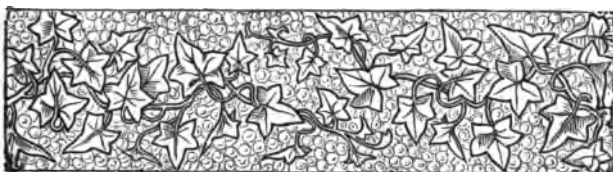
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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF  
CHRISTOPHER KIRKLAND.

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CHAPTER I.

**I** WILL go on with my general reminiscences of persons, not keeping strictly to chronology.

I became as a child of the house in the family of Captain Maconochie, that great and good inventor of the Mark System. He had then just returned from Norfolk Island—the penal settlement of the penal settlements; the lower deep of the lowest

depths; that veritable hell upon earth which he had made human and possible. He had been deprived of his governorship by those at home who thought that to provide for the moral improvement of criminals was to offend against justice, which should be simply punitive.

The whole question of prison discipline and the final cause of punishment has undergone revision since then; and it was Captain Maconochie who started the change. He, who after Howard had the most compassion for convicted criminals, had, even more than Howard, breadth of view and administrative capacity. But the grand idea of giving prisoners an interest in their own good conduct, and of making Hope an element in the process of self-redemption, was unpalatable to the official world. The actual system was founded on the basis of punishment pure and simple, plus the deterring of others by example; the method was that of unin-



dividualized and unelastic coercion; and the new view of self-reformation by rewarding voluntary well-doing was looked on as offering an educational premium to vice, and making crime a profitable moral investment. For do not minds follow the law of all the rest? and is it fair to reform criminals and let honest men go wrong for want of better teaching?

It was the same in other things. When Captain Maconochie advocated certainty of detection as more deterring to crime than severity of sentence, he was laughed at as a dreamer; when he said: 'Reform while you punish, and turn out a possibly useful member of society, rather than a confirmed gaol-bird, sure to come back to his foul roost,' he was ridiculed as a crazy philanthropist who had lost the just distinction between vice and virtue; when he wished to do away with short-time sentences, he was met with the rights of the ratepayers; and

everywhere he fell upon the dead wall of negation, and found himself opposed and baffled.

He was one of those men who fail in their own persons, but whose principles take root and fructify—not to their own profit. The Home Office negatived his scheme ; but afterwards they allowed Sir Walter Crofton to try his Mark System, modified ; and the ticket-of-leave now granted is also only a modification of his more comprehensive idea. It was painful to watch the uphill fight he carried on against inertia here and active opposition there, and to know that all this while a grand truth was being arrested and nullified by prejudice.

His wife, as firmly convinced as he, and as good and sincere and earnest, went for a little in this opposition, because of that fatal quality of exaggeration which makes women such unreasoning partisans and dangerous auxiliaries. Thus, she was an

ardent homœopathist; and when she visited the sick female prisoners in the borough gaol afterwards given her husband to administer, she slipped surreptitious globules into their pockets, to the discrediting of the orthodox system and the encouragement of rebellion against the appointed healers. Her doings, when the medical authorities discovered them, brought the whole thing down about their ears; but she comforted herself for the loss she had occasioned by the consciousness of the good of her cause; and the sentiment of martyrdom upheld her. She believed too in mesmerism; she was a born proselytizer; and she had that kind of fervour in her conviction which denies honesty to all opponents.

My friends were full of interesting stories about the criminals whom they had tamed, subdued and reformed by kindness; among whom, I remember, figured one notorious ruffian, Jacky-Jacky, who had almost homi-

cidal mania. Him they made their gardener ; and Mrs. Maconochie spoke of a certain creeping of the flesh when one day she stood alone with Jacky-Jacky by the fruit-trees in their compound—he armed with a bill-hook, and she defenceless. They had a family of delightful boys, of whom the eldest was singularly handsome and good ; and Captain Maconochie used often to speak of this young fellow's purifying influence over the roughest of the men, and how they checked their ribaldry in his presence because of respect for his youth and purity, and listened to his Bible-reading without a word that would have shocked a girl.

It was the Christian law of kindness all through, rather than the old hard *lex talionis* ; and it answered so far as the men were concerned. But practical Christianity is the worst investment a modern Christian can make ; and to follow the example or obey the precepts of Christ is even more

disastrous than to doubt His divinity. And so my friends found to their cost.

In those days I held, with these dear people, that capital punishment was a barbarism, and that the 'worst use to which you can put a man is to hang him.' Now I am not quite so sure. Life is only valuable for what it gives to the individual or contributes to society; and life-long imprisonment cannot do much for the one nor the other. And as there is always that inevitable 'must' at the end, it makes little matter whether it comes a year or two sooner than need have been, when the intrinsic worth of life has gone and there is no more hope for the man himself. I did not think this then. I was too strong, too fully vitalized, to regard death with other feelings than those of dread as well as pity. But when the coloured glass of vigorous youth, through which one looks at the large landscape of life, has been broken, one sees

things more in reference to the whole, and less with regard to the individual.

But in those olden times we were warm anti-death punishers at my dear friends' house, and just as warm believers in the restoration to righteousness of life for those criminals who were properly directed. We were all humane, religious, believing and unscientific. We had no faith in heredity, and we gave no weight to environment. We believed in mind and soul and spirit; in heavenly influence and divine grace; and we thought that miracles of moral healing could be worked if only a pathway were made for this divine grace to enter and take possession.

If Captain Maconochie had been a less religious man, and if Mrs. Maconochie had been a less logically sincere woman, they would have done better for themselves and their great ideas than they did. The sword of the Lord and of Gideon is a difficult

weapon to wield at any time ; and, on the whole, biological facts and the hard common-sense views of men make more practicable handles than faith in the influx of the Holy Spirit and the answer of God to prayer.

I knew the famous American actress who then divided London into two camps—the one of admirers, the other of detractors. I will not say on which side I am. Things cling about her name which it is as well not to disturb, and the grave, though dumb, is the most potent of all advocates. And she had some superb qualities, if she also had some that were low and mean. Of these last she had jealousy—that lowest and meanest of all in the moral catalogue ; and, for another, she had ingratitude, and knew how to kick down, with consummate address, the ladder by which she had mounted a stage higher. Her mother was the vulgarest old woman I have ever seen. I remember a brief conversation with her which ran thus : The

✓  
 "No. Harley  
 life of -  
 press 144.  
 one

subject was an underhung, wriggling terrier pup:—

‘My!’ said this old lady, looking curiously at the dog. ‘Why, it’s wopper-jawed!’

“Wopper-jawed”? What is that? I asked.

‘Why, don’t you know!—like a wiggler!’

‘But what is a “wiggler”?’ I asked again.

‘Oh my! Not know!—du tell! A wopper-jawed wiggler—just like a pollywog out of a hydrant!’

The first time I heard the expression ‘talking the fifth wheel off a coach’ was from her; and the way in which she used to eat lemons was what she herself would have called ‘a caution.’

✓ Associated with her and her two daughters, in my mind, are a certain medical man and his beautiful young wife. I knew this rather odd, as well as famous American



triad through them, and so the association comes about. What charming days I used to have with these dear young people ! How handsome they both were !—and how young and happy we all were ! As for her, she was one of the most beautiful creatures under heaven, and as good as she was lovely. I have seen the whole theatre turn round to look at her, and she could not walk in the street without attracting more attention than she cared for. She had the carriage of a young goddess or an old-time nymph ; and her character corresponded, in its fearless truth and unflinching honesty with the wonderful nobility of her bearing. He too was a right good fellow ; but though she, alas ! is dead, he is alive—and I do not like to mention the names of those still living.

Also I knew the ‘Raffaele-faced young bookseller’ whose hopes were so high and whose aims were so lofty ; and in his house

I met many of those who, then young and unknown, have since become world-famous. Herbert Spencer ; Marian Evans—our future incomparable George Eliot ; William Smith, or 'Thorndale' as he used to be called ; Dr. Hodgson ; Charles Bray ; Dr. Brabant ; Edward Pigott ;—these were among the stars rising or risen to be found at that house. There too I met Froude, one of our best, if most prejudiced, historians, master of style and eloquent Devil's Advocate as he is ; and I remember once seeing Mrs. Gaskell with her beautiful white arms bare to the shoulder, and as destitute of bracelets as were her hands of gloves.

Above all, I remember one special evening when Carlyle and Emerson were there, and each had his own little circle of adorers clustered round him as he harangued and perorated. The two great men did not speak to each other—only each to his own

special gathering; which was for all the world like a swarm of bees clustered round their queen. I sat apart with that soft-voiced, fair-skinned daughter of Dr. Devise of whom I have spoken before, and wondered at the mental servility of these two groups—a mental servility which I confess was to me more sickening than worshipful.

Morris Moore's newly discovered 'Raffaele' was then almost as much a matter of bitter controversy as it has been since; and the recognition of its genuineness got somehow mixed up with party spirit and became a sign of identification. It was engraved by Linton in the *Leader* newspaper; and perhaps that was the reason why it was taken as a test of Liberalism.

The establishment of that newspaper, by the way, was to all of us ardent youths like the beginning of a moral and intellectual millennium. How ardent and eager we all were! How bravely Thornton Hunt and

George Henry Lewes and other young lions roared in its columns!—and how confident everyone was that it would supersede the *Examiner* and the *Athenæum*, become a monumental success, and transform to its own likeness all divergent public opinion! Oh! those fair false hopes of youth!—those baseless visions of enthusiasm! What ‘strengthless heads’ of dead loves have half the pathos that lies in these dead faiths! What a glorious castle too, we built when the first International Exhibition was reared, and we all believed that the reign of universal peace had begun, and the death-knell of international strife had sounded! And how all these brilliant hopes and iridescent faiths have gone into space, with nothing left as the residuum save disappointment!

About this time came to all of us who were known to be unorthodox a certain private and confidential circular bearing Thornton Hunt’s name. It had for its

object the foundation of a quasi-masonic community—a kind of cryptic church of free-thought, where the unpublished members should be able to recognise each other, and by their aid and counsel support such as were weak before the social trials inevitable to denial. This scheme also fell to the ground, and never went beyond that printed appeal. ✓

With others, I became an intimate in the house of Mrs. Milner Gibson, that large-hearted woman who opened her doors to all the exiled patriots that flocked to England as their only safe asylum, and who was as a crowned Queen wandering through Bohemia. She was one of the most prominent features of London society in her day, and went through the appointed phases of the widest Liberalism, the most marked Bohemianism, the most mystical spiritualism, and the most fervent Catholicism, proper to her kind. But in each and ✓

all the generous heart, the loving nature, the wide, full charity of divine sympathy and pity, remained unchanged.

At her house I met, in their due time, Mazzini, Louis Blanc, Kossuth, Klapka, Pulszky, the Sicilian exiles—notably the Scalias—to mention only a few of the most famous. But when the well-known floating medium got hold of her, her salon was given up to table-turning and séances, wherein she herself was the most deceived and the most credulous. Great efforts were made to convince me of the truth of the phenomena exhibited. I was young, ardent, and a press-man; hence I should have been so far a valuable ally. But though I went diligently to these séances, and was quite prepared to believe in their genuineness, I never saw anything that might not have been done by trick—neither there nor elsewhere.

I was at this house when the notorious

levitating medium was said to have floated to the ceiling. The story is simply this. Mr. Hume was in his usual place at the end of the chain of experimenters, where the circular-table touched the jamb of the window—leaving a free space between him and Mademoiselle, the governess, who always sat opposite to him. Our hostess was always on his left hand. The room was almost pitch-dark—lighted only from the distant lamp in the mews, which this window faced. Suddenly Mr. Hume left his seat and came over to where I was sitting. He leaned over my chair and spoke to my neighbour and me, saying that the spirits were preparing something, he did not know what. The next moment we heard the sound of a piece of furniture moving across the room. It was a light *chaise longue*, which stood by the wall in a line with our chairs.

‘The spirits want me to get on this,’ he

said ; and forthwith he sat down on the couch.

There was a certain man in the company, called Smith, of Peckham, who had been an atheist, but whom Mr. Hume had converted to spiritualism and Christianity. To him this medium was a Christ. He clasped his hands and knelt on the ground.

‘Let me go too !’ he said, praying the Lord rather than making a request to his brother man.

His High Priest gave a rather ungracious assent, and the two moved off ; but Smith of Peckham was found to be inconvenient, so was soon sent back to his old place at the table.

There was a large mirror over a console-table at the end of the wall, facing the window ; and near to this was a heavy old-fashioned ottoman, with a strong and serviceable centre-piece.

In a short time Mr. Hume said he was



floating up to the ceiling; and in the dim light of the room we could see that a dark body was between us and the mirror. The voice seemed to ascend, and we heard the sound of a slight scratching. Then the voice came down. Mr. Hume said he had scratched a cross on the ceiling, and called for lights. There was a great hunt for the small grains of plaster on the floor, and the case was recorded in the spiritualist journal as an undoubted instance of floating.

There was nothing to have prevented Mr. Hume from drawing the *chaise longue* to him by means of a string round the front two legs; moving it by his own feet and muscles; standing on the centre-piece of the ottoman; and, with a knife tied to the end of a stick, scratching a cross on the ceiling. The rest was easy to ventriloquism and certain to credulity.

At other times he showed the hands—luminous hands—which Mademoiselle, the

governess, said she felt forming themselves in her dress. These hands played with the tassel and strings of the blinds, and were phosphorescent. One, coal-black, was the emblem of superstition; another—covered with what they all said was a spiritual veil or refulgent kind of mask, and I a cambric pocket-handkerchief—was the sign of faith. But as no one was allowed to investigate, and as to express doubt would have been impolite, things were received with acclaim by most of those present, and only a few of us had the honesty of silence.

Capable of being made into a useful ally, could I but be caught, Mr. Hume arranged one séance for my benefit. This was the first at which I was present. I must explain the foundations. One of my friends had had a little child of which I had been passionately fond. It had been named after me; I had adopted it for my own; and the whole story was patent to the world.

At the time of which I write the child was dead, and the mother was a hopeless invalid. By all my own people I had always been called Chris, or Christie. By our hostess and the whole group of her friends, who were mine, and by this group only, I was called Crishna. The child had been christened Christopher, and was called Christie.

In the midst of the usual array of luminous hands, this night, came a round shining thing which Mademoiselle, the governess, and Mr. Hume, the medium, both cried out at once was a child's head. For whom? The guests were numbered, and the spirits rapped when I was indicated. This spiritual child was for me. This was my first personal experience of a thing of this kind, and for the moment I was overcome.

‘This means a little child of whom I was very fond,’ I said in a half-whisper to my neighbour. ‘It was called after me and dedicated to me.’

‘Yes,’ said Mr. Hume, as if speaking in a dream. He was in a trance. ‘This little child was Crishna on earth, as it is Crishna in heaven, and its mother thanks you in heaven for your loving care of it on earth. She is standing by you now, blessing you and watching over you.’

She was in her own bed, poor body, incapable of either blessing or watching over even herself!

This bad shot saved me from all after danger of credulity, and left me with a clear mind and untroubled senses to watch and weigh all that I saw.

Robert Bell was one of the most convinced of Mr. Hume’s dupes. He expatiated warmly on the supernatural power which enabled a pencil to lie—on a clinging velvet cloth—without rolling off when the table was tilted to a certain angle. I tried the experiment at home, and found that by careful manipulation I could tilt my own

table at even a more acute angle than the medium had done, and that neither the pencil nor the glasses would fall.

When I said this to Robert Bell he was exceedingly angry, and what had been a very pleasant friendship came to an abrupt and sudden end.

Poor old Dr. Ashburner too, had it much at heart to convert me to the faith; and at his house I saw, among others, the medium who writhed like a demoniac when the spirits were writing in red letters on his large white fine-skinned arm a name that should carry conviction to the soul of the unbeliever.

This man had two tricks—that of this skin-writing, which was soon found out; and that of reading with the tips of his fingers the names written on small pieces of paper, folded up into pellets and flung into a heap on the table. This sleight-of-hand was respectable; but I caught the trick, and told

Dr. Ashburner what I had seen. The dear old man did not believe me and he did believe Mr. Foster, the medium, even after he found out that he had been in prison for felony.

I could fill a volume with my spiritualistic experiences, suspicions, and silent detections of imposture. I have never seen anything whatever that might not have been done by trick and collusion, and I have seen almost all the mediums. Never, anywhere, has there been allowed the smallest investigation, nor have the most elementary precautions been taken against imposture; and the amount of patent falsehood swallowed open-mouthed has been to me a sorry text on which to preach a eulogium on our enlightenment.

Yet all the time I was yearning to believe—to be forced by irrefragable proofs to accept one undoubted authority, which would have ended for ever certain gnawing

pains. Those proofs never came. On the contrary, with every séance at which I assisted came increased certainty of imposture. And yet, now, at the end of it all, though I have never seen a medium who was not a patent trickster, I believe that there is an uncatalogued and perhaps undeveloped human force, which makes what the Americans call a magnetic man, and which is the substratum of truth underlying the falsehoods of spiritualism, the deceptions of hysteria, and the romances of religious fervour. We have not said the final word yet on the development of man; and this uncatalogued force may be one of the chief factors in the sum of future progress.

So far there may be truth in what we hear; but when heavy women are brought bodily through the air and dropped clean through roofs and walls; when notes fly from India to London; and when spirits

materialize themselves and put on hair which is made up of cells and fibres and pigments like growing human hair, and dress in clothes well-cut and stitched together with ordinary thread, beside being loaded with Manchester dressing—then, I think, the common-sense of the world should revolt in indignation at these patent falsehoods and frauds, and the weak should be protected from the cruel craft of the unscrupulous.

What will not people believe? I remember poor old Dr. Ashburner telling me a story of how once, when he was sitting alone at night, in sore perplexity as to ways and means, a knock came to the street door. He opened it, and saw on the pavement an unknown man bestriding a black horse. Without a word this visitor silently thrust into his hand a packet of Bank of England notes, then dashed off down the street and was no more seen. The notes were to the value of five



hundred pounds, and were given by the spirits.

If so, were those spirits thieves or forgers? For these Bank of England notes must have been stolen, either from the Bank itself or from some private person; or, if made by the spirits themselves, they were forgeries and the Bank would have to suffer. But, because the transactions of the Bank of England—like those of nature—are so large as to appear illimitable to us, we do not realize that not one single five-pound note is issued without the utmost accuracy of registration and balance; and that therefore a spiritual theft or forgery of five hundred pounds would as certainly be detected, and would as certainly result in the loss of some individual, as if it had been money taken out of one's own private purse.

It was, however, like arguing against the miracle of the loaves and fishes because

corn is made only by translation of material through assimilation, and is built up cell by cell—and fishes cannot be fashioned without milt and spawn and development, save at the cost of upsetting the whole balance of everything. The dear old man only lamented my blindness, which far exceeded his own, he said sorrowfully. But my Sadduceeism was immovable, and I could not see my way to the spiritual origin of those bank notes—if indeed they ever existed out of the realms of fancy at all. For after he became blind, and his imagination was neither checked nor controlled by his senses, Dr. Ashburner fell into that state of mental haze where the boundary lines between fact and fancy are clean swept away.

What crowds of people, and what multitudes of drawing-rooms come before me, like shapes and shadows passing over a mirror ! Handsome Harrison Ainsworth, with his choice little dinners at Kensal

Green ; Dr. Quin, that prince of diners-out and king of good fellows ; Douglas Jerrold, keen, witty, sarcastic, yet kind-hearted ; those Sunday evenings at Thornton Hunt's, where used to be met that Reader, who always reminded me of the Spanish proverb which bids you beware of the man who speaks softly and writes harshly ; for Mr. Williams, with the softest, sleekest, silkiest manner in the world, had the most trenchant pen, and could cut your very heart out when he refused your manuscript for his firm :—All are gone now ; and of many almost even the very remembrance has died out.

Who now remembers that fine old lady, in her quaint old-world costume, who had been married to one of the notabilities of his day, and was herself a notability in her own ? whose son-in-law was also a celebrity ? and whose daughter is still one of the standing marvels as well as one of the charms of London society ? How well I remember

her friendly interest in me, and how, when I once kissed her hand, she patted my face and thanked me. At her daughter's house I first met one of our since most famous painters. He was a mere lad then, very handsome, and very unused to society. He wore a frock-coat buttoned to the chin ; black gloves ; and his boots showed that he had been walking, and that the streets were muddy. The whole *mise-en-scène* of his life is rather of a different character now !

Then there was that celebrity-loving lady who was always supposed to have been the original of Mrs. Leo Hunter. Her husband had lost his large fortune in some South American mines, but they still 'saw people.' At her house I met poor Miss Pardoe, who took the substance for the shadow, and spent on society the proceeds which she should have husbanded for old age, to find, when too late, that fashion is about the worst bank in which you can invest. She

had very small feet, of which, woman-like, she was proud; and I can yet see the dainty coquettishness of her pale blue satin slippers and the art with which she kept them well in view.

Here I met the two Misses Strickland ✓  
—Agnes, with her ringlets and look of faded prettiness, accepting homage as one who had been used to it all her life; Elizabeth, sturdy, plain, devoted, self-effacing, the one who did the real work while giving to her sister all the honour. She lived only for that sister's pleasure and in her success; and she really idolized her. I shall never forget my own surprise when one day she turned to me, with a look of supreme devotion on her good, plain, hard-featured face, and said—every word like a caress—‘How pretty Agnes looks to-day!’

Once I was taken to see Miss Jane ✓  
Porter, then living in a little street in Bayswater. She was in her bedroom, dressed in

black, and I think she wore a white cap underneath a long black scarf over her head. I was considerably awed by her presence and manner, and I felt as if I had been in one of Mrs. Radcliffe's rooms. She was an eerie, ghastly old lady, and she had that stagey and stately manner of the old school which impresses young people so painfully—impresses and crushes them.

Then there was that pretty little wife of the Q.C., with her trim figure, childish shoulders, youthful manners, and plain-featured daughters—whom she suppressed. She was one of my social godmothers, and stood sponsor for me in more houses than one. She took me, *inter alia*, to Sir Charles Babbage's, telling me on the way that he admitted to his evening parties only pretty women and distinguished men. The compliment was two-edged, and pleased both her and me alike.

Her sister was that famous widow who

spent her substance in searching for the remains of her still more famous husband. But, as was often said, she built her own monument when she manned her ships and organized her expeditions ; and she wrote her epitaph in her conjugal constancy. Nevertheless, I believe it is an open secret that when they were together she and Sir John did not live quite like turtle-doves. ✓

Then there was the barrister, so well known in society, who has now become a legal power and has attained high dignity. What charming parties he gave in his pleasant chambers ! He got together notorieties of every kind, and levelled social distinctions as smooth as a bowling-green. I remember one evening when he introduced sherry cobbler, then a novelty, and when we tried our skill in guessing the face, whereof we saw only the eyes through two holes in the curtain. We all knew Mr. Urquhart's and Chisholm Anstey's.

A strange little drama was then going on behind the scenes of that barrister's life. It was not so much behind the scenes, however, as to be concealed from the whole world; and there were many of the initiated who assisted at its representation. The curtain was rung down one evening, when, pale as his own white gloves, he stood by the door of a certain pretty and popular woman's drawing-room in Belgravia, and saw enter the lady of his long-time love, leaning on the arm of his triumphant rival and accepted successor. He took his public displacement like a gentleman, and effaced himself without a word of complaint or reproach.

I went to the house of Serjeant Talfourd, to whom women owe so much, and who added heroic poetry to his legal reforms and well-considered Bills; and I remember how he kept up the traditions of the then past generation, and came into the drawing-room with a thick speech and unsteady legs.



Then, in strong contrast to all this, I was proselytized by Mrs. Schimmelpennick, whose mystical piety oppressed and chilled me—taking, as I thought it did, all the colour and backbone out of life. I was too full of the fire of youth to accept her quietism and self-suppression—which had not in it the active force of voluntary stoicism. Nor had it the etherealized passion, the sublime poetry, which had characterized the spirituality of Adeline Dalrymple. This had been the fiery essence of passionate love purified from all earthly grossness; but here I felt only the congelation, the paralysis, the death of life.

The most intrinsically remarkable of all my friends at this time was a certain Mrs. Hulme—a woman not in the fore-front anywhere, though she was incomparably the cleverest, the most brilliant, and the most original of my whole circle of acquaintances. She wanted only that energy

which springs from respect for humanity and consequent regard for success—that energy we call ambition—to have become as famous in her own way as a second Madame du Deffand or another De Stael. She was a distant cousin of the Kings, and she therefore felt bound, she said, to be dry-nurse and bear-leader to all their cubs.

‘And as you, my dear,’ she said to me one day, with her curious little smile, cynical for the one part, humorous for the other, ‘are a cub who want a great deal of licking into intellectual shape, I shall be glad to do what I can for you. So come to all my Tuesday evenings, and as often as you like in the week besides. I shall be always glad to see you, for you amuse me—I might almost say you interest me.’

And of this permission I was not slow to avail myself. If society were my favourite primer, I had nowhere such queer pages to

decipher as here. All the other people I knew were tame and common-place compared to those I met at Mrs. Hulme's ; and I date many of my after-views in life to my acquaintance with her and hers.





## CHAPTER II.

**T**HE people who crowded Mrs. Hulme's unadorned and undecorated drawing-room were, to say the least of it, oddly mixed. Among good, steady, high-nosed folk, with whom conventional propriety was as sacred as the Decalogue and the religion of white kid gloves that for which they had the most practical respect, were to be found seedy foreigners who had no investments outside their sharpened wits ; obscure artists whom the Academy rejected and the picture-dealers would not endorse ; shabby literati, said to be capable of great things but

achieving only small ones, and living by methods unknown to men of letters in the mass ; handsome women, with invisible husbands and curiously constant male friends ; unengaged actresses, whose jewels, fine dresses and pretty little broughams did not suffer from their enforced want of work ; and every shade and kind of Bohemianism extant. There were no limits to the breadth and depth of Mrs. Hulme's hospitality ; and as there were no restraints, from dress to certificates, and the only stipulation demanded was the power to amuse or the capacity for being amused, she got round her what Mr. King called a 'job lot'—and a job lot of even more unscoured character than that which Silk Buckingham drew into the net of his famous Institute.

Her evenings were singularly pleasant. There was always good music by professionals, for whom this was a kind of unpaid and unfruitful advertisement. Sometimes

there was an impromptu charade; or a pretty aspirant gave the walking scene of Lady Macbeth, or Juliet on the balcony, as a proof of her powers—if only that stout sleek impresario in the huge white waistcoat and heavy golden chain would make her the leading lady at so much the week. Or a clever imitator reproduced Buckstone, or O. Smith, Paul Bedford or Webster, Wright or Liston, Farren, ‘Little Munden,’ or Robson, to the life, and the stock catch-words ‘brought down the house’ as at the real thing. Sometimes there was a spell of table-turning, or of mesmeric experiments, when young sensitives acted according to order, and proved the truth of craniology by showing love or hate, devotion or disdain, as this bump was touched or that indicated. And always there was plenty of wit and laughter, with a subtle suspicion of garlic and tobacco, and an ever-present sense of hunger and impecuniosity.

The steady folk were scandalized by the free-and-easy tone of these evenings, as well as by the slightly ragamuffin look of some of the guests, and the more than slightly doubtful antecedents and conditions of most of them. But as Mrs. Hulme was a woman of good birth, passably rich, heirless, and of an age when scandal had ceased to make merry with her name—it had made very merry indeed in times past—she somehow managed to hold on with respectability, while she towed her queer cargo behind and kept her own head above water.

She had lived a great deal abroad, where it was supposed she had adopted her loose ways and put off more than her English stays. And the pernicious influence of all that bad foreign example to which she had been subjected was her excuse with those who could not approve yet would not renounce. Thus, nothing

worse was said of her, by even the strictest of the Pharisees who consorted with her, than :

‘What a pity it is that Mrs. Hulme knows such very odd people ! She is really too kind-hearted and indiscriminate !’

If they were odd, however, they were all, according to their hostess, personages of latent distinction and the unrecognised geniuses of the future. What a hot-bed of compressed talent it was !—the crozier heads of forth-coming far-spreading fronds ! What nameless Raffaeles in long hair and thread-bare coats discoursed learnedly on ‘method’ and ‘touch,’ ‘technique’ and ‘morbidezza,’ on Turner’s skies and Stansfield’s seas ; on Chalon’s grace and Etty’s flesh-tints ; on the power of Maclise and the versatility of Mulready ! What cotyledonous Beethovens sprung the notes and broke the strings of that Broadwood ‘grand’ which was Mrs. Hulme’s most important bit of furniture !—



and what fascinating Malibrans that were to be sang 'Robert! toi que j'aime!' looking at that stout impresario in the big white waistcoat, who had their fortune in his pocket if only he would put his hand therein to find it!

And those black-bearded counts and fair-haired barons, with coats buttoned to the chin and not a line of linen to swear by—they were all great men in their own country, and most of them were inventive geniuses, with that potential wealth beyond the dreams of avarice we have heard of so often before, in the shape of unpatented inventions—wanting but so few pounds to set agoing for the certain realization of those dreams! Among them were some good ideas which have since been taken up and worked out into practicality. But it is sad to think that many a germ of what is now an accomplished fact, bringing an enormous fortune to the manipulator, had its origin in the brains of

these poor unfriended foreigners, who scarcely knew where to get the bread and meat that should keep body and soul together.

Mrs. Hulme herself, always sitting in her own especial arm-chair by the fireplace, was not the least remarkable in an assembly where no one was common-place. She was a woman of about seventy, whose love of personal ease had conquered all that personal vanity some vestige of which most women keep to the end of time. She was loose and stout, and with no more shape than the typical sack tried round the middle. Her grey hair was thin and wispy, and brushed straight off her bold full brow; and she wore no cap, as do other women of her age, but only a small black lace kerchief, tied round her face and knotted under her chin. She was always dressed in black stuff, with a grey woollen knitted shawl on her shoulders. She wore black mittens on her soft white flaccid hands; and among her

numerous old-fashioned rings was one large onyx. This she said held her quietus.

‘The day when I can no longer laugh,’ she said to me quite cheerfully; ‘the day when I have to confess that I am beaten, that life is at last played out, and that humanity has become to me more revolting than ridiculous—then I shall open this and bid you all “Good-night.”’

She made no secret of her intention to commit suicide when life should be no longer enjoyable. She had no fancy for dregs, she used to say, with her strange laugh, at once so cynical and so pleasure-loving, so mocking, so sensual and so humorous. And the knowledge that she could die when she chose, without pain or confusion, helped her to live. It was her staff of strength, without which the road would be both rough and tiresome—and perhaps already too long.

I may as well say here as later, that she

carried out her intention, and did one night take that great leap into the dark which she always said she would take when tired of the light. When she found out that she had an internal tumour, which would probably become cancerous, she put her affairs in order; gave her last Bohemian evening, where she surpassed herself in the audacity of her speech and the brilliancy of her wit; and then, with her finger between the pages of her pocket Rabelais, she drew down the thick curtain between herself and the House of Life, and so ended the play for ever. She left all she possessed to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and other kindred institutions; dumb brutes being, according to her, less bestial than men.

She was the first person I had ever heard speak of suicide in this philosophical manner—as a thing to be discussed like any other—an act of free will and intelligence, good

or evil according to conditions, but not necessarily a sin, a mystery, a shame, a dread. And her words made on me one of those ineffaceable impressions which are the birth-hours of thought.

Of course the first time she spoke to me I was shocked—and more. My father had never mentioned the subject without horror, as murder of the worst kind—impiety of the most damnable character—the one sin which could never be repented of. Cato might be pardoned, because Cato was a heathen ; but a Christian who had the true knowledge was outside the pale of forgiveness—and God Himself had limited His own power. But the thing was altogether forbidden ; and even discussion was an irreligious tampering with evil. It was to be simply abhorred in silence, like any other infamy. Yet I remember when a poor fellow, a clergyman, cut his throat not far from Eden, my dear father would not

allow a harsh word to be spoken of him, but said only:

‘The mercy of God is infinite. Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.’

For here, as so often in his life, personal charity was stronger than dogmatic harshness, and the man pitied what the theologian condemned.

Of this teaching I naturally retained the impress, and looked on self-murder as one of those crimes which have no two sides and for which there is no kind of palliation. And now, here was Mrs. Hulme calmly upholding not only the moral right, but even the social value, of suicide, and proclaiming her own intention of one day practising what she professed!

Two years ago a new arithmetic would have seemed to me as possible as a new moral code. Theology might be, and was, an uncertain quantity, but morality was as fixed as the everlasting hills. But now, I

confess it, my absolutes were beginning to dissolve. My old principles were laughed out of court by my Paphian friends the Free-lovers, with whom the sanctity of marriage was effaced in favour of the imperialism of love—by the hedonism of Mrs. Hulme, with whom duty was a superstition and pleasure the final cause and great end of existence.

Yet these people were neither criminals nor savages. They were thoughtful, kindly, cultivated, conscientious ; and the ordinary theological writ about the depravity of the human heart did not run among them. Still, they made morality discretionary and not compulsory ; and changed the granite stability of right and wrong into a nebulous kind of individualism, where all was convertible according to convenience, and nothing was radical and superior to conditions.

Thus it was that I first began to see the

moral law as a question of evolution and social arrangement, void of extrinsic divine ordination—that, while recognising some laws as better and making more for progress than others, I had to confess, also, that nowhere has been said the final word, and that nothing has received its last and unchangeable form—that everything on earth is relative—from colour by juxtaposition, to crime by the circumstances surrounding it.

In manner Mrs. Hulme was kindly, brusque, unconventional, familiar. She never rose from her chair, let who would enter the room ; and she kept a seat immediately behind her for her favourite of the evening, to whom she laughed and talked over her shoulder. That beside her was for the last comer, who was expected to vacate it when another visitor entered. If he delayed, he was ordered off without ceremony. She called women by their Christian names, and



men by their surnames, without prefix or distinctive title ; and she treated all young people like children, rebuking, encouraging or caressing, according to her mood, as if these young heroes had been so many boy-babies at her knee.

In religion an atheist ; in theoretical politics a socialist ; despising human nature, and therefore tolerant of its weaknesses and indifferent to its vices ; mocking, cynical, irreverent ; without tenderness of sentiment to make her sympathetic with earnestness, yet marvellously kind-hearted and generous to excess, she stripped every question that she touched of all sacredness, all mystery, all poetry, all divinity, and reduced it to a standard as prosaic as the market-price of a pound of tallow-candles. She scoffed at the idea of hidden mysteries, and denied the peculiar sacredness of things because they are unknown. She saw no difference in kind, only in degree, and

swept the whole universe into the same abyss of contempt.

‘ The Divine Life to be found in bugs and blue-bottles ? ’ she said with her mocking laugh when I, still under the influence of Adeline Dalrymple, spoke as I had been taught. ‘ So you make yourself a deicide every time you catch the one or scrunch the other ? The Divine Life energizing itself in a stinging-nettle or a dandelion ? What rubbish ! Reduce your pretty fancy to reason, and you will find that your divinity means, on the one hand, bigness and complexity of organism—on the other, that which pleases and profits yourself. You vapour about the beauty—a condition of the Divine Life—of a lily ; but you will dig up and destroy that stinging-nettle aforesaid. A beautiful woman is of course very divine—but that flea biting her neck ? that midge making a bump on her forehead ? Pshaw ! You have a great deal yet to learn, my dear

boy, and a great deal more to unlearn. We shall have to scrape those brains of yours clear of all the superstitious whitewash plastered over them, if you are to do any good in life or see things as they are.'

'Say what you will,' I answered, 'there must be something at the back of creation; and life did not come of itself.'

'How do you know that?' she said drily. 'If you do not know one thing you do not know another; and one unlighted candle is as good as another when you are in a dark room and have no matches.'

According to Mrs. Hulme, we come from nothing and return to nothing—or, rather, we are simply old material re-combined and re-incorporate. We are mere phenomena of the hour — mere phantasmagoria in time and appearances fitting though space—no more stable than clouds, no more individually valuable than so many melon seeds. If any secret meaning lies at the back of

life, we have not found the key yet, and never shall. But she denied any secret meaning at all, and treated the whole thing as a huge cosmic joke and energized satire.

‘A fortuitous concourse of atoms—creatures bound by the material circumstances which have formed them—brought into the world without their own consent and by no action of theirs—dependent on time and place, food, parentage, and weather for what they are and do—and then credited with an immortal soul to be punished or rewarded for deeds done in the flesh!—those deeds as necessarily the result of material conditions over which the individual has no more control than has the acorn when it springs into an oak and not an ash—than has the piece of wax when it is moulded into the likeness of Jupiter, or battered out into the mask of Silenus! What logic! What reasoning! And this is the nineteenth century! And you are one of those who

“lead public opinion.” The blind leading the blind, with a vengeance, and the ditch as the consequence !

‘But what do you make of free-will ?’ I asked. ‘We all have free-will, and can choose the bad or the good at pleasure ; we are not the mere slaves of material conditions.’

She measured my head with her two hands. Among other things, she was a phrenologist, and believed in George Combe as well as in Lavater.

‘A simple question of proportion,’ she said. ‘Intellectual, moral, animal :—which of the three is largest, there will be the thing you call “free-will” ; that is, self-governance through the preponderance of the intellect—passions which are uncontrollable because of the weight of the cerebellum—or the higher range of social instincts because of the size of the coronal region. The mind is like a muscle—it cannot go beyond its

own power. A weak arm cannot raise a heavy weight; a small intellectual and moral development cannot overcome a large animal region. The doctrine of free-will, like all the rest of human life, is a delusion. It has its economic uses. So has the belief in heaven and hell—in the eye of God and the claws of the devil. But economic uses, because men are ignorant and therefore superstitious, do not make a lie the truth, nor delusion a reality.'

'Then you would destroy the conscience?' I asked.

'What is conscience?' she returned. 'The public opinion and fleeting ideas of a certain time and era individualized. Is that an absolute?'

'If it is not, then all human virtue goes to the wall,' I answered. 'Your theories leave us neither spiritual influence nor eternal laws of right—neither truth nor conscience.'

She laughed in her mocking Voltairean way.

‘Eternal laws of right, spiritual influence, truth, the absolute, conscience!’ she said. ‘And pray, my dear, what do you make of any of these, outside external conditions? Point me out one virtue which has not been merely the expression of the needs of the time, cherished because of social exigencies;—tell me of one that has been absolute from the beginning anywhere, and in all stages of civilization—and then we can talk of the divine illumination of conscience and the eternal rule of right. Go over the list. Truth, which is the most necessary of all as the mutual defence-work and protection between man and man—the concordat of society and the basis of association; Chastity, on which the family is founded, the family being in its turn the foundation of society; Justice, which is the taproot of law—these, the very elements of all the rest, are es-

entially geographical, chronological, social. So also is magnanimity; so charity, liberty, patriotism, temperance—and all the rest. The whole fabric from end to end is a matter of growth and modification; and this absolute rightness, this divine illumination of the conscience, about which you ecstasies talk such egregious nonsense, is the mere result of external education, like proficiency in mathematics or clever combinations in chemistry.'

'Then right and wrong do not exist?' I said.

'As unchangeable principles?—no!' was her answer. 'Where do you find them? In the Bible? Surely there least of all! But in no place—none! Polygamy, honoured as well as lawful in the East, is prostitution in the West. Mohammed sanctified what David and Solomon and the patriarchs had all practised and what Christ and later Judaism forbade. Who is to



choose between the two systems, and pronounce arbitrarily on either? Slavery, supposed by the Jews to have been expressly sanctioned—and limited—by Jehovah; practised by all barbarous peoples and a main feature in the civilization of Greece and Rome; upheld in the United States as morally allowable, divinely ordained, and valuable for the general good—has become to us of late years an accursed thing, and we have put it away from us. But the doctrine of a man and a brother is one of quite modern growth. It is not even essentially Christian. Yet before the rights of man were preached you cannot say that slavery was a crime. There can be no fault where there is no better knowledge. You might as well say that belief in dreams, touching for the king's evil, or any other foolish outcome of superstition, was a crime. It was only ignorance. And he who would condemn

ignorance must begin with the new-born babe.'

'You make life very uncertain, and leave no solid foot-hold anywhere,' I said.

'Do you think so? I do not. On the contrary, I find in my belief the greatest certitude,' she answered.

'How? Where?' I asked.

She laughed again.

'In a paradox, my dear—in the universal phantasmagoria and mirage that it all is—the universal delusion and maze of everything,' she said. 'There is no reality except illusion. There is no absolute standard—only the opinion of the day; and morality, truth and right, change their names and dresses according to time and place, just as our winter is the Australian summer, and the despised donkey of the London costermonger is the honoured ass of the Eastern dignitary. We are no better than blind puppies abandoned by their mother, and we know very little

more than they. We do not even understand the material of the basket in which we find ourselves, nor our relations with the rest of the stable where we have been littered.'

'I cannot push God out of the world,' I said. 'He is the Absolute; He is the Truth; the Life of the universe and the Soul of the soul of man'!

'All in capitals?' she said, lifting her upper lip, but with no sting in her good-tempered contempt. 'All right; I congratulate you, my dear boy. You have found the key to the riddle which the world has so long sought in vain. Give me your talisman. Teach me your method. It is worth knowing.'

'My talisman ?—Love !' I answered fervently, thinking of Adelina Dalrymple.

'Yes? love? Love of what?—of whom? Love between the sexes ?—sometimes not a very celestial matter,' she said.

‘Love in Nature,’ I repeated.

‘So!’ she said drily. ‘The Divine may be there for you, but for myself, I cannot for the life of me find God in a stagnant horse-pond, nor in a ploughed field spread over with dead fish. And I confess I see Him no more in hawks and tigers, bogs and weeds, than in this bundle of passions, weaknesses, appetites, treacheries, and impulses we call man. But your Pantheism, to be logical, must include man as well as beasts and roots and stones and trees.’

‘And why not?’ I answered. ‘Man is the base of our ideal God—he is the best we know.’

‘In which case all I can say is—bad is the best, and very bad too; and your divine tabernacle is wonderfully in need of repair, and a very ramshackle concern all through.’

‘That which He has made must have something of Himself in it,’ I said. ‘Nature,

and with nature man, are both the expression of the thought and power of God.'

'You believe in direct creation?' she returned, as if with surprise. 'You believe that we are consciously and intentionally made as we are, by a Supreme Being who could have done so much better for us if He would? How odd! If I were to think so, I should go as mad as if I were locked up in a torture-chamber where I had to witness the agonies of others, and be twinged myself as a gentle reminder of consanguinity. To believe that this world, with all its pain and misery, its disease and death and ignorance, is the deliberate work of an Omnipotent and Omniscient Deity, seems to me the most blasphemous assumption—if there be such a thing as blasphemy—the most illogical and self-contradictory idea, as well as the most derogatory to the character of the God proclaimed, that the mind can conceive. No, my dear, I make no God responsible for

all this misery ! It was not by the direct act of a Supreme Power that Pompeii and Herculaneum were destroyed—that we are born by torture and have to die in agony—that we have to protect ourselves from the elements which else would annihilate us—that we have to labour if we would live, and to suffer if we would enjoy—no Conscious Power is responsible for all this. It is the Law—that thing of which we know neither the origin nor the issue—Law without consciousness, without favour, without discretion, without individualism—Law as cold and stony as one of the old Egyptian gods, sitting through all eternity, their hands resting on their knees, deaf to the cries of men, dead to their prayers, and unmoved by all that passes before them, whether it be the blood of slain men or the laughter of little children.'

All this kind of talk fascinated while it half-terrified me. It had on me the same

effect as conjuring up the devil and the practice of the Black Art must have had on a mediæval student. It was peeping into forbidden places and listening to forbidden sounds. The boldness of Mrs. Hulme's negations; the cynicism of her morality; her contempt for all those things which have ever been most sacred to man, and which were then my holiest treasures of faith; her keen wit; her kind heart and the barrenness of her spiritual nature—all made her a study of singular interest to me. But my interest was mixed with dread and my affection for her was dashed with reprobation. I was in a new world when with her; and I had not yet polarized myself. My enthusiasm was pitied as the fever of youth; my principles of deepest root were shown to be unworkable in actual life; the 'counsels of perfection' to which I yet clung were set aside as moral fairy tales, without substantiality or reasonableness; my faith in

the essential qualities of vice and virtue was treated as a superstition on all fours with Aubrey's astral spirit, the properties of the herb moly, and the gift of invisibility lying in fern-seed. When I spoke of the absolute, I was met by the relative, the evanescent, the apparent; and I was becoming familiarized with the doctrines which made all life mere vapoury phenomena, where nothing is new, nothing is true, and nothing signifies.

As I have said, Mrs. Hulme's contempt for humanity made her latitudinarian all through. She was philosophically tolerant of lying and deceit, of selfishness, treachery, unchastity, and all the rest, because she expected nothing better.

'They have broken the eleventh commandment and been found out,' she used to say. 'Everyone does the same, but some manage better than others, and fasten their doors with a closer lock. It is all that question of the lock—you may be sure of that, my



dear! Behind the door everyone is pretty much alike. An Archbishop is only a chevalier d'industrie made honest because he has no need to cheat. Take away his lawn sleeves and put him into a jockey's jacket, and in place of a saint you will have a blackleg. It is only a matter of dress and assignment.'

'Do you allow no good in human nature?' I asked, a little impatiently. 'What do you leave us?'

'Well, I leave you Nero and Domitian and Caligula and all that lot—Lucrezia Borgia and the Marchioness de Brinvilliers—Gilles de Retz and the whole crew of inquisitors—and a crowd more; all own brothers and sisters, founded on the same ground-plan as your saints and heroes, and all divine tabernacles according to you. What more do you want?'

'Oh, Mrs. Hulme! how can you live without faith in God or love for man?' I

said with real pain. 'I should die if I were out in the wilderness as you are—if I were so desolate and deserted.'

A sudden look of tenderness came into her face and moistened her eyes. She leaned forward in her chair and took my hand between both her own.

'What a child you are still, my six-foot-two dreamer!' she said. 'When you were a little fellow, did you not suck your thumb before you went to sleep? I am sure you did! You suck your mental thumb still. It served you then for comfort—was as good as a lollipop. So are your beliefs and aspirations, your vague adorations and baseless certainties, now! It is almost a pity to take them from you prematurely. The day came when of your own accord and by the law of growth you left off sucking your thumb and yet went happily to sleep; and the day will come when you will cease to idealize human nature, and yet you will find

life tolerable when you have left off believing in its pretty fables.'

'And I am to find no one good, no one true or faithful?—not though I know and love you?' I asked, masking emotion under playfulness.

She patted my head.

'What a pretty speech!' she said. 'I despise flattery, my dear, but I love it all the same. When I hear beautiful music, I know it is only a cunning combination of sounds made by lifeless material. But it stirs my blood, for all that it comes out of the bowels of a cat and the wood of a tree—nient' altro! So thank you for your nice little bit of humbug, which is pleasant to hear and which I do not in the least believe. So far from thinking me good, you think I am a horrible old woman, given over to the devil and all his works, and destined to be damned to all eternity.'

'I do not,' I answered. 'I do not agree

with you, but that does not prevent my respecting you.'

'How should you agree with me?' she said, with her mocking little laugh. 'I am old, you are young; I know, you believe; I have proved, you hope. We are not on the same platform. It is impossible. But you will come to me in time;—that is, if you are made of stuff that matures and ripens and does not wither green—nor become fossilized before it has fructified.'

'And then I shall despise humanity?' I said.

'Yes, my dear — despise, pity, aid and not condemn it,' she answered. 'It is a poor thing; but it cannot help itself, any more than a snake can help its poison-fang or a jelly-fish its want of backbone. It is so, and no one is to blame. But, being this poor thing, do not talk to me of the divinity lying within it, nor of the omnipotence, the love which energizes this grossly cruel and imperfect world.'

This was the kind of thing which Mrs. Hulme perpetually said to me; and I wonder now how my belief in goodness and the right survived her efforts to kill it. It did. I could not be brought to that terrible contempt which seemed to her the key of all wisdom—the awful mirror bought of truth by knowledge. I must love. I must be able to feel reverence, and to trust; and to live among the dry bones as she did would have ruined me for ever. If I had doubted those whom I loved, I should have doubted of God. And this was to me that mysterious sin against the Holy Ghost on which my young imagination had been so often exercised.

No ; Mrs. Hulme was wrong. There was more than blind Law under which we lived—there was Divine Providence ever leading us, like little children, step by step, higher and higher. There was more than the irresponsible animal in man—there was

his soul, his conscience, his love, his aspiration, his truth. And there were always some who were absolutely good—had I not loved Adeline Dalrymple?—and right and wrong were facts, not fancies.

So I fortified myself against my old friend's cynicism, and for her dead negation substituted my own fervent affirmation, and made sure that I had the Truth in front of me. And I was still actuated by principle, and did my best to put into practice those counsels of perfection which had always stirred my soul and, so to speak, fired my spiritual ambition. But I made a terrible fiasco of my worldly matters in the process, and put back the dial-hand of fortune for as many degrees as it had gone forward.

For instance : I had written a novel, for which Mr. Colbourn, one of the great publishers of novels of that time, had agreed beforehand to give me three hundred pounds. Now, three hundred pounds, in

those days of hard work and narrow gains, was a small fortune; and I had reckoned on it with the satisfaction of certainty. But my book was an unconventional and daring sort of thing; and when it was finished I began to think it was not quite the kind Mr. Colbourn had anticipated when he bargained for it. He came to me on the day when I told him it was completed; and he had the three hundred pounds in his pocket-book. When he took out the notes I laid my hand on his.

‘No,’ I said; ‘let it stand over. Take the manuscript; and if you do not like it, I let you off the bargain.’

He did not like it, and I lost my money. But I kept my sense of honour, of truth, and fair-dealing; and was not that better?

When I told Mrs. Hulme what I had done, I really thought the end of our friendship had come. She raved at me for my folly, my absurd pride, my presumption

even, in pretending to arrange Mr. Colbourn's business for him. What right had I to teach him the lesson of not buying a thing he had not seen? Who was I, to think myself wiser than a sharp man of business who knew what he was about a great deal better than I could tell him? So she stormed. But at last she ended by taking my face between her large, soft, flaccid hands, and kissing me on the forehead.

'You are a fool,' she said in her queer cynical way; 'about the biggest out of Bedlam. But,' she added more softly; 'you are a good fool—which is something.'







### CHAPTER III.

**N**ATURALLY all the Liberals, and even the Freethinkers who cared nothing about the intrinsic merits of the question, were on the side of Mr. Gorham in the controversy about baptismal regeneration which took place between him and 'Henry of Exeter,' that diluted representative of Hildebrand, or, more properly, Thomas à Becket modernized. It was easy to foresee the tyranny of the High Church, should it ever have supreme power. For though Tractarianism was only in the protesting and struggling stage, a condition of things for which

Liberals have a constitutional sympathy, yet we knew then, as we know now, that it was the effort of tyranny, happily restrained, to place its yoke on the necks of men. It was like Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea, apparently helpless and ill-used and asking leave only to live like the rest. Once seat him on your shoulders and you will never know intellectual freedom again!

Men suffer individually from the moral grip of the Low Church ministers; yet, as this grip is more congregational than organic, it can be shaken off when desired, and is by no means so dangerous as that other. The 'sin of Erastianism,' which the Tractarians denounce, is the only safeguard of national religious freedom; and while the Church remains national, and holds in its hands any kind of directing power over the lives of citizens, it ought to be essentially, not nominally, Catholic; that is, it ought to

include in its bounding line as much diversity as may be without self-stultification.

For all that, and in spite of the part which I, and others like me, took in this Gorham affair, the Evangelical section was, and always has been, profoundly abhorrent to me. The constricted human sympathies of these people—their hostility to science—their superstitious adhesion to every word of the Bible, whatever geology or philology may say—their arrogant assumption of absolute rightness—their greater reverence for certain mystical and unprovable doctrines than for active and practical virtues—their unnatural asceticism, which has none of the manliness of stoicism in it, but is founded on the crushing idea of Sin, that pallid spectre everywhere, even in our affections—in a word, their sanctimoniousness, gave me in my early youth a repulsion for the whole school, which I retain to my

cooler and soberer old age. I have had a wide personal experience of this section, and when I speak of them it is according to knowledge;—which is the only excuse I can offer for a prejudice I confess to be both illiberal and unphilosophical.

Amongst the full-flavoured Bohemianism and scoffing Voltaireanism of Mrs. Hulme—the practical honesty and unreserve of my uncovenanted friends, the Free-lovers—the sharp and brilliant, but not always modest, wit of Mr. King's lawyer guests, to whom nothing was sacred save success—was wedged in the Evangelical straitness of the Honourable and Reverend Mr. Caird, the Low Church incumbent of the parish in which my boarding-house was situated. My father had stipulated that I should attend the church and make the personal acquaintance of the clergyman, whoever he might be, within whose jurisdiction I might be placed; and, of course, I kept my word.

This intercourse was my penance for the pleasure of the rest.

The Honourable and Reverend Mr. Caird was one of those ecclesiastics whose very personality sends one's blood the wrong way. Manner, look, voice, enunciation, gestures, all are studied and artificial with these men, who talk of glōry and knōwledge, saving grace, the blood of Jesus, and the new birth, as others talk of the crops and the weather. Everything is subdued, nothing is spontaneous about them; and there is the ever-present consciousness of superior holiness, like a visible varnish, over them. The thin lips, tightly closed, seem unable or unwilling to take a deep draught of vitalizing air. Who knows what sobbing breaths of sinful passion may not have profaned it?—what rude impulses of vigorous life may not have stirred it?—unlawful for those whose castigated pulses may never throb beyond the chill regulation

beat. The smooth clean-shaven face is as impassive as if cut out of wood. No generous flash of quick emotion brightens the cheek nor softens the eye, dilates the pinched nostril nor dimples the sterile mouth. You detect the clerical impress on that impassive face the first instant that you see it ; for the episcopal laying-on of hands has left the thumb-mark for ever. The eyelids are generally dropped over eyes which may not see too much of Nature, that robust child of goat-footed Pan, with its bold glances roving free and wild over all the mysteries of life, and its ruddy mouth, red with the juice of fruits, laughing up to the sun, its creator and preserver and destroyer in one. Nature, which is unredeemed—humanity, which is unregenerate—are both among the things inhibited to the ‘ saved ’ sons of the Gospel. To them Love itself is a snare and a sin ; and the very passion of a mother for her

child is deprecated as an idolatrous preference for the creature over the Creator.

As for Nature, the word itself is redolent to them of impiety and indelicacy. I remember how once, when my sister Ellen, protesting against the arid teachings of one who it was then thought would be her mother-in-law, said warmly : ‘ It is not natural,’ received for her rebuke : ‘ Natural, Ellen! how can you, a Christian young woman, use a word at once so indelicate and profane?’

Still, the men themselves are often so good, so conscientious, that it is impossible not to respect them as individuals, how much soever one may shrink from them as officials. And this was the case with me in my intercourse with Mr. Caird.

He lived only to do his duty, as he conceived it, and to spread what he thought to be right principles. But what principles they were! He sanctioned no kind of

social pleasure and found sin in the most innocent amusements. Cards were always the 'devil's books' with him; a theatre was the equivalent of hell, and those who went there were predestined to eternal damnation as surely as those who sunk in mid ocean were doomed to be drowned; and dancing was also synonymous with damnation. He once found himself at a lady's house where a small impromptu dance among the boys and girls was got up. They were only children, none counting over ten years of age.

Mr. Caird routed up his wife, took her on his arm, and went straight to the hostess.

'Madam,' he said severely; 'I cannot stay here to see these young souls led down to hell. Either this sinful pastime must be stopped, or I and my wife must leave.'

As the lady refused to stop that in which she saw no kind of harm, and thus make



a whole roomful of innocent little people unhappy, as their sacrifice to this Moloch of superstition, Mr. Caird acted on his threat, and buried himself and his wife in the cloak-room until his carriage came to take them away.

Another time his wife went out with a cameo brooch in front of her dress. Seeing it for the first time as she came from the cloak-room, unshawled and bare-necked, he peremptorily bade her take it off, saying, with more prudent prevision than substantial delicacy :

‘Take that off. It attracts the eyes of men to a part of your person it is not desirable they should look at too closely.’

He was a man as incapable of understanding or discussing a religious doubt as was my father himself. He might, perhaps, have scraped up as much moss of tolerance from among the boulders of his convictions as would have enabled him to discuss

variorum readings of certain texts ; but any doubt cast on the bases of his faith—that was beyond his limit; and to have entered on it at all would have been to him like holding a candle to the devil, where the torchbearer would have been as damnable as the demon he served.

To him and all his school the devil is a personage as real as that next-door neighbour the Socinian, and hell is as actual a place as Paris or Rome. Logical and literal, they admit no refining away of words nor enlargement of sense by the doctrine of development. The worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched are material and existing things. They cannot accept the softening exegesis of 'tropes,' 'parables,' 'speaking to the people in the language which alone they could understand,' 'doctrine according to the learning of the times, and not permanent and fixed in the face of better knowledge,'

with which the Broad Church smooth out difficulties. The words are final and of cast-iron; consequently the material personality of Satan and the topical reality of hell are matters of absolute certainty which nothing can undo.

I was once present at a very painful scene in the house of one of these fervent believers in the personality of the devil and the physical pains of hell—a scene which made a great impression on me and drove me farther and farther from the line of orthodoxy. The eldest son of the family had lately died. He had been a wild outward kind of young fellow, who had enjoyed his youth too freely and flung his cap too far over the windmill. He had been thoughtless, extravagant, pleasure-loving; and he had done a great many things which it would have been better to have left undone. But he had harmed no one but himself; and his worst offences had been due to tempera-

ment rather than to any obliquity of moral nature.

One day, about a month after his death, I was dining with the family, when the father suddenly laid down his knife and fork, covered his face in his hands and burst into loud weeping. We saw the tears run down below the palms of his hands and ooze through his fingers. His eldest daughter got up, went over to him, and put her arms round his neck.

‘Dearest papa,’ she said; ‘what is it? what troubles you?’

‘Ah, my dear!’ he sobbed; ‘I was thinking of poor Jim in hell!’

The strange incongruity of the thought, so ghastly and so grim, with the prosaic circumstances of the meal, made a contrast that I have never forgotten.

Poor man! How often I have thought of the needless agony of that moment; and how often I have wished that I could help

in breaking once and for ever all these cruel chains which bind men to misery and falsehood. We deprecate the sacrifices made of life and manhood to Juggernaut; are ours of spiritual peace and courage made to Satan any more respectable? By my own early torments I can gauge the misery felt by others; by my own early terrors I know the strength of that mysterious fear which possesses the souls of those who believe and tremble.

I was brought into even closer personal relations with this section of the Church. My sister Ellen was engaged to be married to the son of one of these Low Church clergymen, and I was naturally a reprobate and accursed to the family she was about to enter. Mr. Smith, her father-in-law elect, made it a condition of the marriage that she should give me up as completely as if I were dead—that she should never see me, hold no intercourse with me, and that she

should abandon me entirely, as the plain and manifest duty of a Christian woman.

We were a strange family and full of apparent contradictions. We might quarrel among ourselves at home, as we did; I might be reprobated and considered abominable by the rest, as I was; but we were too strong-willed a race to submit for submission's sake to king or kaiser. And Ellen, who had never specially loved me and had always trounced me when she could, refused to accept any husband in the world on these terms.

‘Christopher may be quite wrong in all he thinks—and he is quite wrong; that I admit,’ she said; ‘but he is my brother, and I will not give him up. And if Morley’—her lover—‘has not courage to stand by me, he need not.’

He had not the courage; and the marriage was broken off, to my intense trouble. But Ellen did better afterwards; so that

burden of unavailing regret was rolled off my shoulders. And indeed I doubt if she would ever have been happy in a family where it was considered indelicate and unchristian to say that a thing was unnatural, and where the theatre was considered as one of the Halls of Eblis.

In later years another sister discarded me of her own free-will for my unsoundness. This was when she had become a believer in the theory of the Ten Tribes—in universal Jesuitism, so that a Freethinker, a Socinian, an Evangelical, a Tractarian, have each and all been supposed by her to be so many emissaries of the Jesuits—in secret poisonings as matters of weekly occurrence—in the Apocalypse, and the Seal now being opened (witness thereof the potato disease and the phylloxera)—and in ghosts, apparitions, presentiments and warnings as among the ordinary phenomena of this solid earth.

Not all these Evangelicals are sincere ; or, if they are sincere in their convictions, they have odd irregularities in practice. A certain great provincial light in these days was the leader of the Evangelical school where he was stationed. An eloquent preacher, he longed to get to London, saying : ‘ I am an oak in a flower-pot here ’—though his place was in the second city of the kingdom, and his fame and following were as great as if he had had St. Paul’s for his pulpit. Among his hearers and friends was a very charming young married woman, with that kind of mental activity which made her go into religion as she went into society ; study the esoteric meaning of texts as she studied Balzac and Georges Sand ; and long for peculiar enlightenment as she longed to be received at court and to work her way into the houses of the great. It was one part of human life to her ; and she had a feverish desire to know all the parts,



and to possess herself of everything by which her mind would be filled with new ideas, as a balloon is filled with gas.

Mr. — was a handsome, well-favoured man, also desirous of new ideas, and not disinclined to lead blind white souls into the light, nor to set dainty tripping feet on to holy places. He and his fair friend often read the Bible together. He expounded and she took in. How it really ended I do not know, for she did not tell me more than this little anecdote. When they were sitting together in the summer-house, with the Bible open before them, he suddenly re-enacted the drama of Francesca and Paolo—they were studying the Song of Solomon—broke out into a declaration of love, and, when she repulsed him, reminding him that both were married, flung piety to the winds and said :

‘Let us then go down to hell together.’

This is all I know; and I know this only

by the voluntary confession of the lady herself. The Oak in the Flower-pot I never saw; and I never told the story against him. But I used to laugh to myself when I heard his name, and think how odd it was that I knew so much of him, while to him I was not even the shadow of a name.

Hearing so much of sin from Mr. Caird, and seeing how he conjured up this pale and ghastly spectre everywhere, I set myself to think out the matter and to clear the question, so far as I could, from all conventionalized interpretations, going down, more meo, to the foundations of things. And going down to the foundations here, I made it clear to myself that elemental sin does not exist, and that the whole thing is a question of proportion. Cut away the base of anything—even of murder—and you cut away a necessary and integral part of human nature. Exaggerate this absolutely necessary base, and you come to disproportion

and selfishness—that is, to sin; as in the instinct of self-preservation, of which anger or revenge, culminating in murder, is the excess, the exaggeration, the disproportion, the crime. Also I made it clear that certain virtues rest on a physical basis; as, the value of chastity in woman for the sake of the purity of the race—the value of temperance in man for the sake of the health of the offspring.

When I had reasoned this out for myself, I can scarcely describe the relief I felt; how much more manageable the whole question of human life became; how much wider the horizon, how much clearer the light. Instead of that maddening mystery of the origin of evil, and why God, who is Omnipotent, causes His creatures to be born in sin and conceived in iniquity, I came to the simple equation of comparative excess and conditional ignorance, of which the results must be dealt with as severely

as may be, but whereof the cause is remediable, and will one day be removed. It seemed to lift me out of the depths, and to invest humanity with a hope and power forbidden while I believed in the inborn wickedness of the human heart. I saw law, crime, and punishment as the logical conditions of human society—society conscious of its needs, and acting out the law of self-preservation by repressing excess and punishing inordinate selfishness. But this was a very different thing from the doctrine of elemental and intrinsic sin which the Low Church holds so strongly. And, as I say, the freedom, the light, the hope, the cheerfulness which resulted from my conclusions made a new moral world for me. So far I owe gratitude to Mr. Caird and his followers. That powerful stimulant of opposition, which has ever worked so strongly in me, led me to the examination of the whole matter; and I burst into

freedom through the very contemplation of bondage.

It was about this time that I met Robert Owen, then an old man, but still full of pith and vigour. His belief and enthusiasm were in no wise damped by disappointment, and he still held on to his idea of philosophical communism as the ultimate outcome and regeneration of society. I became his ardent convert, and had there been a 'phalanstery' founded on philosophical principles I would have gone into it. In some form or other I felt sure that these principles of co-operation would ultimately prevail; and we see their partial working at the present day, under a new name and an altered shape. But I should have liked to have seen the question fairly tried, and to have proved for myself what was the moral hitch to prevent smooth running. We can live peaceably together in hotels and pensions—why not in a community,

where we should simply enlarge the principle, and still further restrict that bane of life and progress—selfishness?

Together with Owen I knew Dr. Travis, the delightful man they used to call his Paraclete. He was one of the loveliest flowers of humanity; but he wanted magnetic force and vitalizing energy. Handsome, well-read, singularly well-bred and as pure as a good woman, he was content with holding sacred the faith that had been bequeathed to him, but he made no valid efforts to spread it. He might not have succeeded if he had; but I have always thought that if a more supple intellect, a more worldly-wise and experimental man, had taken the management of Robert Owen's ideas, we might have had co-operation sooner in time and more radical in organization than we have. It seems to me very certain that the thing has to come sooner or later, and that mutual support will some day be the rule of

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society, rather than what we have now, universal competition.

The strange variety of thought and view found among the people I most frequented made a moral and intellectual dissolving view or kaleidoscope which sometimes a little bewildered me ; and I often asked with Pilate: 'What is Truth?'—that question which no man answered then, and no man has answered since ; and yet we all believe that we ourselves have this Truth. And I in those days thought that I had it in faithful belief in God's Providence and power ; in the ultimate good of all things ; in the perfectibility of man and the rapid advance of society towards that perfection ; in the sure progress of the soul after death ; in the elimination of the devil from the scheme of the spiritual world ; in the sweeping away of hell ; in the divine life within us ; in the universal Fatherhood of God—God above and beyond us all—God revealed in

the mind of man—God untrammelled by church or creed or formula, neither Christian nor Jewish, neither Mohammedan nor Brahmin, but everywhere, in all beliefs, in all heroic deeds, in all faithful effort, wherever a prayer went up to heaven or an act of sacrifice was done on earth. For though I had got rid of sin in the abstract, I had not relaxed my hold on good; and of all arguments, that which maintains there can be no good without evil was the one I most passionately repudiated. Light was light to me, and I could not admit that it needed darkness to enable it to exist. And in like manner God was God, and needed no devil as His shadow.







## CHAPTER IV.

**A**LTHEA CARTWRIGHT lived with her aunt, Mrs. Pratten, in a pretty house in South Bank, where, for all that South Bank was then looked on as so much in the country as to be almost beyond the reach of Londoners, they saw a great deal of society and attracted many well-conditioned people. Ladies certainly grumbled at the distance, and made that and the possibility of foot-pads on dark nights their excuse for keeping away; but men found the weekly receptions delightful and the more intimate association full of charm; and Mnemosyne Lodge, as

the place was somewhat strangely called, was never without its attractions and its visitors. It was a kind of social honeypot round which the flies continually buzzed, and no man who once went there ever failed to put in a second appearance.

There was a mystery in Mrs. Pratten's life which no one understood. When a young woman she had married a man apparently her suitable match in every way ; and she had kept with him four days. On the fifth she went back to her mother's house, and never left it again. What happened to divide these wedded lovers no one knew. It was one of those well-kept secrets on which all may make theories at pleasure ; for no one can either disprove or verify, and one hypothesis is as good as another. Neither the husband, who was still alive and who enjoyed life as a bachelor in Paris, nor Mrs. Pratten herself, told more than the mere fact betrayed :—They had married a life

time ago, and they had parted after four days, never to meet again.

Since that time the one ever spoke with the bitterest contempt of women—the other with the profoundest horror of men. To Mrs. Pratten all men were marked with the Sign of the Beast; and she was accustomed to say that nothing tried her faith in God so severely as the creation of such monsters as men. To Mr. Pratten, whom I afterwards knew in Paris, women were mere jointed dolls, and there was no hope for the human race, doomed to the degradation of being mothered by such unredeemed and absolute fools.

Being so uncompromising a man-hater, Mrs. Pratten was, of course, a misogynist. She lectured every girl of her acquaintance on the sin of matrimony, as if this were indeed a crime; and, though she accepted women who were already wives when she knew them, she repudiated those who took to

themselves husbands after she had known them as girls. She professed for them a horror only equalled by that which she felt for the men themselves.

With Althea she was explicit enough. If ever she were to fall away from grace and virtue so much as to marry, she would be cut out of her aunt's will as irrevocably as she would be banished from her aunt's house. If she remained unmarried, as a good and modest woman should, she would come in for all. And as Mrs. Pratten was a wealthy woman, who lived up to about half her income and put out the other half to interest, the bribe was considerable, and so far had proved successful. Althea Cartwright was Althea Cartwright still ; and everyone knew that she would not marry, and indeed could not, unless she got hold of a millionaire.

When I knew her she was some way past thirty—a tall, fair woman with an almost perfect figure, at once generous and graceful,

where the outlines were long and flowing and the filling-in rich and firmly modelled. Her face was not strictly beautiful, and yet she was more attractive than many confessedly beautiful women. She had an abundance of shining flaxen hair, with a shade of red to be sometimes seen in the sunlight, and her skin was of that clear but not unhealthy pallor which generally goes with flaxen hair. What would else have been its exquisite transparency, however, was marred by freckles, which were the standing sorrow of her life. Her eyes were light-hazel, large, finely-shaped and wonderfully brilliant; her nose was short, rather blunt, but beautiful in profile; her lips were curved, flexible and delightfully expressive of her emotions; her hands and arms were simply perfection; and she was singularly soft in manner, speech, voice and texture. Indeed, her main characteristic was softness. Yet she was not weak; still less was

she flaccid or without grip. She knew what she wanted, and she took it and held it for so long as it pleased her ; and when she no longer cared for it she let it drop, and walked on without it. She had the most consummate ability that way, and was no more to be held against her will than a mermaid in the water—no more to be constrained than the cloud which once looked like Juno. More Ixions than one knew this ; and no one had yet found the charm which could compel her to maintain any kind of relation whatsoever when she wished to abandon it. From friends to servants, she held while she would and took the good while she could ; and then she slipped aside and discarded without a second thought. No ; Althea Cartwright, the softest, sweetest, and apparently the most pliant creature in the world, was certainly not weak nor yet flaccid.

Her central point was her devotion to her

aunt, whose moods she divined with almost intuitive perception, and to whose humours she adapted herself with marvellous plasticity. For among her other qualities she had the temper of an angel, and a power of sympathetic receptivity which made her the favourite confidant of all who had anything to confide. But though she was thus devoted to her aunt, she managed to live her own life with tolerable breadth of margin ; and, while Mrs. Pratten never went out in the evening, Althea was never at home, save on the nights when they themselves received. Popular as she was, everyone wanted her. Women seemed to love her as much as men admired her ; and when once a house-door was opened to her it was rarely shut again. The oddest part of the whole thing was, she always seemed to have some strange power in those houses where she was intimate. I think she did a good deal for her lady-friends as well as for the men ;

and I know that she sometimes screened them and sometimes helped them. At all events, she was useful ; and she was far too good-natured to refuse a request, whatever it might be. But these concentric circles revolved round and never broke into the standing duty of her life ; and her aunt had no cause to feel herself neglected.

Mrs. Pratten was a kind of palimpsest of all the crazy faiths that float about the world. She had gone through the whole cycle of religious experiences, yet had learned no self-distrust from her repeated failures. Her last state was always her final revelation ; and for all that the voice of God had already spoken to her in so many different dialects, she was invariably sure that this last was that in which He had spoken to Moses on Mount Sinai. ‘ Guided by the Spirit ’—that was her phrase. Were this so, it cannot be denied that she had been guided into many queer corners



and landed among many odd heaps of rubbish. She had adopted every mystical creed extant, and was now in the full swing of the most mystical of all :—it was before the days of Theosophy and Occult Buddhism. She was a Swedenborgian, and a ‘spiritist’ of the school known a few years afterwards as that of Alan Kardec. His ideas had been in the air before he consolidated them into a system ; and Mrs. Pratten, who caught all floating theories as boys catch moths, had adopted them for herself. She believed in successive incarnations of the spirit, and amused herself by tracing back the pedigree of her friends’ souls, and locating each in its special tabernacle.

Of her own incarnations she was never weary of talking. She was a frail, meagre little woman, with a mousy face, a nervous manner and a temperament as timid as a hare’s ; but she gave to herself all sorts of heroic and spiritually splendid antecedents,

and jumbled up her pre-incarnations into an olla podrida of the oddest kind. She had been Miriam and Judith, Joan of Arc and St. Theresa, Queen Elizabeth of England and Queen Elizabeth of Hungary, Dorcas and Elizabeth Fry, besides others which I have forgotten. She added to her impersonations so often that she herself got somewhat 'mixed,' and lost all hold of a dominant idea; and I, among others, was hopelessly muddled.

Her niece, Althea, had been a whole string of interesting frailties; among whom I remember figured Bathsheba, Aspasia, Fair Rosamond and Mademoiselle de la Vallière. Her penultimate incarnation had been Marie Antoinette, as a sign of progressive improvement. But Mrs. Pratten spoke with pride of the moral superiority of her present condition, and the cleansing fires through which her soul had manifestly passed. This avatar was better than all the

others. Even Marie Antoinette was married :—Althea, thank heaven ! was husbandless, and one of those divinely marked on the forehead.

Me she called Nero. Certainly, in the daguerreotype taken of me, I had a curiously Roman look, not visible, I fancy, in my real face. But I did not feel conscious of my identity with the imperial madman who, she said, had been my former self. When I objected on the ground of non-recognition, she became more than ever positive that she was right, and assured me that this was the best proof I could give, both of my identity and my spiritual advance. I was ashamed of my former self and therefore repudiated the connection. I had forgotten my then cherished sins, just as we forget the angry passions of our childhood. So far I too was cleansed, and by just so much was nearer to ultimate regeneration. Perhaps this was my last incarnation, as it was her

own and Althea's. She was certain of these; and she hoped, but was not quite so sure, of mine. She thought I had in me still too much of the original red earth of which the first man was made. And while we had any of that left in us, we were too heavily weighted to soar upward to the New Jerusalem.

Another of her amusements was to find out the correspondences of her friends in the animal world, and to determine whether they were the further evolution of that energy, the enlargement of that idea, which had initially expressed itself in beasts of prey or beasts of burden; in the animals which are the sustaining sacrifice or in those which are the companions and servants of man; in singing birds which delight him; in insects which torment him; in reptiles which destroy him. She subdivided even these divisions, as when she gravely pondered on the question whether I was a setter or a retriever.

She finally settled it by a spiritual ukase:—I was a retriever. For herself, she was the solitary unpaired female eagle—the third of the nest; and Althea was a butterfly—that which had crawled having now learned to fly.

Also, it cost her many hours of anxious thought to determine to which organ of the Great Man, which she and her co-religionists say makes the shape and conditions of Heaven, we should all be assigned when we had done with our re-incarnations, and had finally shaken off the last grains of that red earth which was the cause of our bondage and the chain of our darkness. She placed herself in the eye, ‘seeing’ being her faculty. Althea was in the great sympathetic nerve; but she moved my locality from organ to organ as she shifted her ideas of my character—and when I last heard of myself I was in the nerves of the tongue, as the discriminator of spiritual food.

Odd as she was in all this, Mrs. Pratten was not substantially insane. She was on the borders, I admit; as must needs be when a woman with an active brain of small size, and more imagination than critical faculty, has allowed her reasoning powers to become practically abortive, while she has cultivated indiscriminate belief as the alpha and omega of spiritual insight, and passes her whole time in hunting out analogies. This search for analogy is neither more nor less than so much spiritual patch-work—piecing together forms and colours which harmonize and make a pretty pattern. For even religions follow Mrs. Pratten's own law of analogy; and some are simply mental amusements, as was hers.

Queer as she was, yet, being withal rich, hospitable, of good family—and the aunt of Althea—people flocked to her dinners and suppers; assisted at her séances and expositions; and laughed at her afterwards

as their compensation for time wasted. It was as much as their good-breeding could compass not to laugh at her to her face when she told them of the spirits who had visited her and the revelations which had been made to her. For really, to hear what Napoleon had to say about the celestial bell-shaped tent in which he lived—in the palm of the right hand—and how Marlborough and Gustavus Adolphus and the Black Prince, and all other illustrious warriors, were also living in bell-tents within a stone's-throw of each other, was rather strong meat to come between the roast and boiled! People who walk habitually in spirit-land do undoubtedly scatter a few of their wits by the way; and poor Mrs. Pratten had scattered some of hers, like the rest.

Her favourite scientific craze at this time—for she prided herself on her science equally with her religion—was the Odic Force and

mesmeric clairvoyance. She had been one of the first in society to follow after Reichenbach and to believe in the Okeys. Now she had elaborated a medium for herself. This was her maid—a certain sharp-witted little Welshwoman, called Sarah Jones in the parish register. In Mrs. Pratten's blue book she was Ruth. The extraordinary 'sensitiveness' which this young person possessed—the way in which she exemplified and even went beyond all Reichenbach's experiments, and the certitude with which she discovered magnets in the dark, owing to the light which played around them and streamed in purple filaments from the ends—were matters of constant wonder to the world which witnessed. The sceptical did not know how it was done ; the credulous were all agape at the marvel.

I noticed that Althea avoided discussion on the topics which made her aunt's whole



happiness and filled her mental world from centre to circumference. She believed in them, of course. She accepted her former doubtful incarnations and her present progressive improvement with her customary serene grace; was quite sure of her eventual lodgment in the great sympathetic nerve; had not a doubt that Sarah Jones, the black-eyed, sharp-witted girl from Wales, was once the sweet and patient Ruth; was convinced of her ability to see a magnet when hidden in a cupboard, and of the purple filaments which streamed like flames from either end when the armature was removed; convinced also of her obedience to orders transmitted by thought from Dover to London; of her knowledge of the word written on a piece of paper and placed inside a hazel-nut or sealed up in an envelope; of her being able to travel to the exact spot where Sir John Franklin and his men were lying stark beneath the snow;

of her interpretation of the mystery of the Foley Place murder; of all the things which 'sensitives' do and know. All the same, out of Mrs. Pratten's presence Althea never talked on these matters. When pressed, she used to refer her interlocuter to her aunt, who understood these things so much better than she herself did! She was only in the place of an ignorant believer. How indeed, could she be a disbeliever, when such marvels were daily enacted before her eyes? But she was neither an expositor nor a teacher. She left that to her aunt; and she did not care to talk about the thing at all. It was beyond her; and she felt lost and bewildered.

If she did not actively support, she never showed the faintest doubt as to the genuineness of the phenomena; and to the last no one knew what she believed and what she discredited. For if Mrs. Pratten had dropped a few of her wits by the way, Althea had kept all hers intact. And, said the sceptical

and squareheaded: 'How could she possibly believe such rubbish?'

From the first both aunt and niece showed me much kindness. Mrs. Pratten looked on me as a future certain convert. She recognised my love of truth; and, as she knew that she had the 'true truth,' she said she was as sure, as of to-morrow's sunshine, that I would come to the light wherein she stood. It was only a question of time and teaching. She knew that I was still too full of red earth; but sometimes the work of winnowing went on at rapid speed, and I might be one who, when the sifting once began, would get rid of all that clogged the spiritual machinery in less time than one could count. Also, as a literary man, I would be a valuable convert. I never blinded myself to the extrinsic importance given me by my profession; and I understood from the first that the hand of the pressman was of more account than the still

further purification of the spirit of Nero. This, therefore, was why Mrs. Pratten made so much of me and had me so often to her house; and Althea naturally followed her aunt's lead in this as in other things.

With Althea was another reason to lend additional force to these—I filled a gap. She was one of those women who have always on hand a 'brother' or 'son' or 'uncle,' according to relative age, with whom they go about—to the opera, the theatre, sometimes down to Richmond, to Greenwich, on the Thames; whom they take into society and introduce to their friends; and whom the world agrees to accept as adopted relations according to nomenclature. I was presented to her by Mr. King, who in his day had been her uncle; and I was presented at the time when she was looking out for a new kinsman. She had just lost her 'favourite boy'—a young barrister who had gone out

to India; and she was therefore, as she lamented, sonless. And as she was now growing an old woman, she said with her seductive smile and a peculiar softness veiling the glitter of her greenish-hazel eyes, she preferred sons to all other relations. She was so fond of boys! They were such dear fellows with their funny fresh ways; and men were such dreadful creatures! Hence she adopted me, in the place of Ronald Ray removed; and I was quite willing that she should.

She was of immense use to me in every way. She took me with her into society, and introduced me freely to all the best people she knew. And she knew a socially higher and more fashionable set than even that to which I had been taken by my pretty patroness with the childish shoulders, or than I found staring at luminous hands in the house of the friend of Mazzini and the believer in the Floating Medium. And

of itself this was a valuable experience. She polished my manners as much as the material would allow ; taught me the shibboleth ; instructed me in those microscopic minutiae which only the initiated can see, but the absence of which they detect at a glance and resent as a crime ; and she wanted to make me a fine gentleman from head to heel, in character as well as in bearing. She found fault with me as I was—chiefly for my want of small change in conversation—for my want of all badinage and lightness—for my vehemence when I talked on those things wherein I was really interested—for the frankness with which I gave my opinion when I was called on to say what I thought and what I believed. And above all, she found fault with my superabundant earnestness.

‘*Glissez mortels, ne vous appuyez pas,*’ was her motto ; and she found my step too firm and my grip too close.

So did her lady friends ; some of whom seemed to consider me good fun because of the 'simplicity,' the 'naïveté,' the 'innocence' which they said more than once was 'delicious.' But I was not of the stuff which makes fine gentlemen nor courtiers ; and through all my gratitude for their kindness, and a certain inevitable dazzle of the senses by reason of the rank, beauty and wealth of those by whom I was caressed, I kept my head steady, and the core of me was never reached. There was something about these grand ladies which intellectually repelled me, for all that personally I was attracted. There was a certain insolence of egotism to which I could never reconcile myself, and which came out in all they did and said and were. The wretched stuff which passed for Art with them ; the miserable daubs ; the flimsy writing ; the idea-less music ; the hideous jingle called poetry which they displayed to each other with

pride, and for which they received such lavish commendation! What good did their education got by foreign travel do them, if, after having seen the galleries in Florence and Rome, Dresden and Madrid, they could think simpering masks were human likenesses and tea-board abominations landscapes according to nature!

I got an ugly glimpse into something worse than self-contented incapacity, through the offers made me by more than one great lady who wanted to appear as an authoress without the trouble of writing, and who thought to buy my brains as she would have bought so many yards of silk. Did not the then famous Baroness —— come to me with a bundle of woodcuts for which she wanted me to write a story under her name? --and did not Lady —— and Mrs. —— both ask me to take their manuscripts and put them into readable shape for so much down? And were they not all offended because I



refused? And did not Althea herself say that I was twin-brother to that Huron of old time who stands as the ideal of unpractical folly, and that I would never make a man of the world?—never!

Again, the lives of these grand ladies struck me as so fragmentary, and the scope of their energies as so small and thin! An hour in the morning given to the acquirement of an art which takes for years and years the whole day's working-time of him who would be a proficient; the importance of fashion, of etiquette, of the artificial rules of conduct by which living human nature is checked and stifled; the sense of individual and social superiority to the commonalty, and one's own consequent inferiority evidenced by their very condescension; the consciousness that any man out of their own social sphere is to them a mere toy or tool, to be used for their pleasure and cast aside when they are tired of him; their want of

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thoroughness and humility, and their unbridled egotism—all this created in me a certain moral and mental revulsion which kept me from the self-abasement of social ambition.

Young as I was, I was determined that it should not be said of me, as was said of some one else : ‘He is smothered in Countesses.’

I went among these grand ladies because Althea Cartwright wished it ; but I went as an outsider ; and I was never anything else. I was too proud of my own order and too essentially democratic to wish to shift my place or to shine by reflected splendour. And all Althea’s endeavours to make me understand the value of being seen in certain drawing-rooms failed. From the first days up to now, grand folk were and are nothing to me but curious studies. While they cannot confess to equality, I refuse to kowtow to superiority, such as is

given by mere name and fortune. Not inheritance, but acquirement, is, I think, the only true gauge of merit ; and the name that is won far surpasses the lustre of that which is bequeathed. And these principles are not those which harmonize best with fine ladies and fine drawing-rooms.

Notwithstanding this stiffneckedness, Althea's kindness to me did not diminish. On the contrary, it increased, and often became so great as to be a little startling and bewildering. She called me her boy and presented me as her new son. She found out my tastes and ministered to them, even to providing for me a special kind of cake that I liked, and to giving me a certain champagne glass, which I fancy had gone the rounds. She worried newspaper editors, and all those who had the power, for boxes at the theatre and stalls at the opera ; and as she had her own little brougham, these evenings cost neither her

nor myself anything beyond the flowers and the ices which were then *de rigueur*. She loaded me with small presents, which embarrassed me to receive and were utterly useless to keep ; but she would take no denial ; and when I remonstrated, she would tap my face with the tips of her fair, soft fingers, and say, with mock anger :

‘Naughty child ! may not a mother do as she likes with her son ?’

But in the midst of all this undeserved kindness, as the days came and went a certain strange unrest and impatience seemed, as it were, to line her satin-like softness—a certain core of almost fierceness, almost harshness, to lie within the outer envelope of her habitual tenderness. She was always kind to me in word and deed—caressing, indulgent, ‘spoiling’—and yet she seemed dissatisfied with me, as if she had secret cause of grief against me. And she was so strangely distrustful of me—so

exacting of assurances, protestations, promises! She used to make me swear every time I saw her, she holding both my hands in hers, saltier-wise, that I would be faithful to her—quite, quite faithful; that I would never have another friend like her—never take one so near to my heart, nor give to any living woman the affection I had given to her. She used to torment me—not all unpleasantly — with her jealousy, which overflowed at all four corners. In that pale pink room off the first landing, where she made her private nest and received her own especial guests, she made me go through many an agitated half-hour by jealous accusations flung broadcast, and as aimless as so many arrows shot in the air for any chance quarry that might be about, although unseen:

After I had sworn and vowed and protested with sufficiently strong emphasis to satisfy her, we used to have a grand recon-

ciliation—if that could be called reconciliation where the fracture was all on one side; after which things would go smoothly for a day or two, and the sky would be cleared of its phantoms.

It was after one of these scenes, when she had been angry and I had been contrite for absolutely nothing, that we came to an understanding.

She took my hand and pressed it against her heart.

‘Feel that, you naughty boy!’ she said caressingly; ‘think how dear you must be to me, when you can make my heart beat like that for fear you do not love me as much as you ought!’

‘But I do love you!’ I replied. ‘You know that I do! How could I help loving you? No one has ever been so kind to me as you, and no one is so delightful.’

‘Is that true?’ she asked.

‘Yes, absolutely true,’ I said.

Her breath came with a quick little sob.

‘If I could believe you!’ she said softly; and as she spoke the scales fell from my eyes.

True, she was many years older than I; but what of that? She was beautiful still, and delightful in every way. I was young and could work; and her certain disinheritance when she married me would free me from all suspicion of fortune-hunting. I had my own future in my own hands, and fortune would be the friend to me she always is to the self-reliant. She loved me. There was no vanity in thinking this; it would have been stupidity not to have seen it. And I—I loved her, and had forgotten Adeline Dalrymple:—of whom, by the way, I had never spoken to her.

I took her in my arms and kissed her upturned face. She closed her eyes, and, dead white as she was, I thought she had fainted, till half a smile and half a tremulous

little movement of beseeching came over her colourless lips, as she whispered tenderly:

‘I love you!’

I forget now what I said or did, for I was swept away by the emotion of the moment. I only remember pouring out a whole torrent of love and thanks and violent delight, ending by a picture of our lives when we should be married and safe in our love together.

And when I said this Althea opened her eyes and looked at me as if I were something strange and comical—something she had seen for the first time, that amused her.

She raised herself, stood erect and firm before me, and threw back her head.

‘You extraordinary child!’ she said, with a light laugh that jarred on me like a false note in music. ‘Marry you, caro mio? No! anything but that!’

So here was another tumble for that



unlucky Icarus, myself, and a new draught of that (poison or elixir?) experience.

My friendship with Mrs. Pratten and Althea lasted for some time. At my age, in the very morning of life as I was, with all to learn and so little to forget, it was a novelty to me, as delightful as it was new. But though so much in it was pleasant, there was also much that was painful; and many things grated on my sense of truth, and made me sometimes feel as if the whole earth were void and humanity but a simulacrum that held nothing, if indeed it were not a mask to conceal deformity. When I learnt from Althea the truth, which I had resolutely refused to suspect because I was afraid to believe it, that all the manifestations and proofs of sensitiveness, which passed as the unregistered data of a new science and a living truth, were made up between herself and the maid, and when, in answer to my

remonstrances, she only said, in her calm, clear, soft, but immovable way:—‘I am doing no wrong. What harm is there in making a poor old woman like my aunt happy? She likes it; why should she not have it? It is better than dram-drinking, and answers the same purpose,’ I felt as bewildered as if I had been suddenly blinded, and I mentally staggered as if I had been struck.

‘But truth?’ I said. ‘Does that count for nothing? Do you not think it wrong to aid and abet what you know to be a lie?’

‘What a Puritan you are!’ she answered, laughing. ‘As if you did not know as well as I that the whole world is one huge falsehood! You dear innocent old fellow—or you dear old hypocrite. Which is it, Crishna? You will never open your eyes, if you are really an ingénu. If you are not, you are the cleverest young Tartuffe out!’

‘Well, I do not think I am a Tartuffe,’

I said, just a shade nettled. 'And is opening my eyes, as you call it, synonymous with tolerance of falsehood and disbelief in rectitude?'

She looked at me a little oddly.

'I do not think you need ask that,' she said drily. 'Who lives on the house-top? Do you?'

It was so much the recognised thing, as I have said, for Althea Cartwright to carry about her boys, that no one made any remark when she and I went into society together as if we had the right of close companionship by blood-relationship. A few women certainly looked at me askance, and some men laughed, as it were, behind their hands. But no one said anything, except a certain Colonel Hinds, an old 'brother' of Althea's. And he one evening, hitching his arm into mine as we left Mnemosyne Lodge together, said, in a half-bantering, half-warning manner :

‘So, you have the box-seat now? All right, my boy! Give everything but your heart, do you hear? If that goes into the abyss, you may drag for it in vain. You will never fish it up again!’

Also, as time went on, Mr. King gave me a long lecture on the folly of too much sincerity. To take the world as we find it and make the best of our portion; to enjoy all that is set before us and never to examine the material; to understand men and women and not to expect more from them than they can give, but to profit by what they have, and to be always gallant and grateful and discreet—and never in earnest:—this was his advice and the lines on which he had constructed his own life. But he was sorry, he said, to see that I was too hot-headed to be wise, and too fatally in earnest to be diplomatic for the one part or on the defensive for the other.

My relations with Mnemosyne Lodge

came rather abruptly to an end. All Althea's favourites had to go by the same road; and it was interesting to watch the difference of their methods.

Among my friends was a certain James Tremlett—a splendid young fellow, handsome as a Greek god, the heir to a fine estate, with nothing to do but to enjoy life as fortune had ordered it. To do him justice, he did this to perfection. I was one day walking with him in Bond Street, when Althea passed in her pretty little open phaeton, the forerunner of the victoria. She stopped her ponies to speak to me. While she spoke to me, however, she was looking at Tremlett in that fixed, full, yet not bold way, which was one of her charms. With her exceedingly sweet and gracious manners, her low soft voice, her atmosphere of tranquillity and sympathy, that long fixed gaze had in it something indescribably alluring. It was irresistible.

She told me of a water-party for the next week which she wished me to join; and, looking at Tremlett, then back again at me, she said with a smile, and slowly:

‘Gentlemen are always valuable at such times. Will you bring your friend?’

Whereat I presented Tremlett and left him to answer for himself.

The answer was in the affirmative; and after a little more talk she shook hands with us both—she shook hands to perfection—smiled in her sweet caressing way, and drove off; as she went, turning back her graceful head as if unconsciously, with one last look at Tremlett. He on his side looked after her with a strange smile. Then, turning to me, he said carelessly:

‘Your friend is very taking. Tell me about her.’

I told him all I could; and all that I said was in her honour. But some vague impulse of jealousy made me less enthusiastic

than I should have been had I been describing her to a woman, to an old, or to an unpersonable, man.

When I had finished, Tremlett said carelessly :

‘ You are fond of her, I see. If I were you, I would not trust her with too much of my heart. I know the kind.’

‘ You do not know her. She is to be trusted, I assure you,’ I answered eagerly.

‘ Yes?’ was his indifferent reply. ‘ Well, you see, you know her and I do not ; you ought to be the best judge.’

Events proved that I was not so good a judge as he ; and that he had read at sight what I had not learned after months of almost daily intercourse.

This introduction was the beginning of the end ; and it is not necessary to trace the process. I was dispossessed in my place as favourite, and James Tremlett was elected in my stead. If I were to go

through the whole story, day by day and step by step, until I came to the final moment when I was refused admittance, while—as I stood by the door—Tremlett, dashing up to the house in his private cab, was taken in without delay, I could say nothing more than this :—My fair friend had tired of me ; the play was played out ; the lights were turned down ; the curtain was lowered. And I had to accept my silent dismissal with such patience and philosophy as I could command—such patience and philosophy as others had shown.

But I was too young, too untrained and passionate, for this. I made scenes and had quarrels, followed by false assurances and false reconciliations—in each of which I felt that I had lost and that she had receded, and had become by so much the more intangible. I knew that I was doing myself no good by all this, and that I was



shouldered out and could not reinstate myself. Yet I could not help trying in the beginning—knocking my thick head against a stone wall while running after a fading rainbow.

Then, when I finally recognised that I was absolutely dispossessed, and that I could not recover what I had lost, I grew savage and sulky, and refused to go to those general At-homes which was all the inter-course that was left me. This naturally made Althea angry, inasmuch as it gave cause for gossip and forced her to find reasons. She resented that I had not let her slip gracefully and quietly, as others had done. Open breaches are such nuisances; and who on earth keeps always to the same set of friends?

My present savageness, however, was a proof of past sincerity; and so far ought to have pleased, because it flattered her. But the Althea Cartwrights of life do not

care for sincerity. They want only the amusement of the hour, without having to pay the piper when the dance is over. And a savage like myself is both a blister and a danger.

Undoubtedly it would have been more polite, more manly, better breeding altogether, had I accepted my fate with the same stolid indifference which, to all appearances, others had felt. But it must be pleaded in my self-defence that I had really loved her. Perhaps those others had not. She had played with me, but I had been desperately in earnest. And the strange manner in which she slipped away from me gave me no purchase, no point by which to hold her, but melted away like a cloud—the masterly cleverness with which she effaced and obliterated all the past, and stood like one of those German Ellewomen, unmoved by all I suffered, untouched by all I said, was beyond me to bear with

equanimity. But my turbulent despair and then my sullen resentment cost me dear, as I found afterwards.

The friendship between James Tremlett and Althea was of briefer duration than mine had been. It came abruptly to an end when Tremlett married, as he did suddenly, and broke with Mnemosyne Lodge as cleanly as a champagne glass is snapped at the stem. He saw Althea one day; the next, he wrote her a letter of eternal adieu; the week after, he married; and when he returned home with his bride and met his fair friend with her ponies in the Park, he did what no power should have made me do—and what no true man could have done—looked her full in the face and passed on without recognition. I was there, a witness to the whole thing; and for the first and only time of my acquaintance with Althea, I saw her fair clear-skinned face and rounded throat dyed crimson.

Just at this time Althea became acquainted with Mr. Dundas, my irascible editor, who was as susceptible to the power of a pretty woman as he was violent with men ; and from the first day of their acquaintance my star in the office declined. What was said I do not know. All that I do know is, I suddenly failed to please. I, who up to this time had been a kind of cherished seedling who might some day develop into the very roof-tree of the office, now could do nothing that was right. Day by day my independent articles were rejected and my routine work was undone ; while I myself was rated with the peculiar force and fervency with which our chief knew so well how to flavour his displeasure. Finally, I was abruptly dismissed, and told to go to the devil, but never to show my face in that office again ; and for his parting blessing Mr. Dundas hurled a wild world of invectives against me, amongst which I distinguished ‘ a presumptuous and

ungrateful young brute, who does not know how to treat a lady when he sees her, and who thinks, because she has patronized and been kind to him, that he can ride roughshod over every decency of society!’

So here I was adrift on the great sea of life, with a dragging anchor and no harbour in sight!

As to Althea Cartwright, to whom I shall not recur again, I need only say that when her aunt died she found herself, as she had been always promised, supremely well-endowed, and the owner of everything, save a handsome legacy to Sarah Jones, the re-incarnate Ruth—by which this clever young person was enabled to marry the inn-keeper of her native village, and live as a lady in her degree to the end of her days.

As soon as her affairs were settled, Althea went abroad, married an Italian Marchese and became a Roman Catholic. Her husband died about two years after the marriage; but

she is still alive and well, a white-skinned, flaxen-wigged old lady, fond of tea and cards, and enjoying life in her own way. That way is the close companionship of priests, monsignòri, papalini of all kinds; and the consideration which surrounds a wealthy English widow and convert in the Eternal City, where the Pope is still able to dispense social honours to the faithful, and to float on the crest of the wave those whom he favours—no matter what the secrets whispered to the discreet ears at the other side of that grating of the confessional.





## CHAPTER V.

**M**Y anchor did not drag long. I was too energetic to be demoralized by my first failure; and my fall in nowise maimed the hope and resolve which are the best pioneers of certainty. Casting about for a continuance of press-work, which was the substance, while my independent writings were the decorations, of my income, I happened on a Parisian correspondentship just then vacant, and went over to the Brain of the World as one of 'Our Own.'

Here I entered on a new set of experiences and broke fresh ground everywhere.

I had several introductions, both private and official; and some to the confraternity. But I did not find these last very useful. I do not know how these things are managed now, when telegraphy has equalized endeavour, but then the whole system was one of rivalry. In the interests of his paper, each man wished to be first in the field and to have the practical monopoly of private information. Hence, brotherly kindness, and doing to others as you would be done by, did not obtain among men whose professional loyalty lay in misleading, tripping up the heels of and outstripping their competitors.

One man, however, was free from this kind of class-jealousy; thinking that the world was broad enough for everyone to move freely in his own place, and that it was better for the public at large to receive true information than for even his own paper only to have the truth and all the others to be stuffed with 'ducks' and lies. The man I mean



was Frazer Corkran, that generous and genial correspondent of the *Morning Herald*, whose hand was ever open to his friends, who knew neither grudging nor jealousy, and whose house was such a pleasant rendezvous for both the floating and the resident literati. In him I found a willing guide and ready helper in my salad days of inexperience; and many a time he put me straight when else I should have gone astray, and filled my notebooks which else would have been half empty.

I found as true a friend in his bright-witted and sympathetic wife—a woman always glad to enlighten me with advice, to introduce me to those whom it was good for me to know, and to give me information where I needed it. Theirs was one of the pleasantest houses open to me—mixture of the home and the salon as it was; and I soon became like an outlying member of the family, round whom the children clustered

as of right, and who was admitted farther into the penetralia than were most.

I also had the entrée to the salon of that sharp and amusing little woman who not long since passed over to the majority at a far riper age than most of us attain. When I knew her, Madame Mohl was already old—or at least she seemed old to me in the insolence of my luxuriant youth; but she was in the perfection of her mental powers. I cannot say in the perfection of her beauty, for she never possessed the very faintest suspicion of good looks. Nor did she care to make the best of herself as she was, but despised even such grace as comes from trimness and conformity. Shall I ever forget the extraordinary figure she made when once, as I called by appointment, I found her in dressing-gown and slippers, sitting in the middle of the salon, reading, while the little girl whom she had adopted was pulling at her scanty frizzled hair till

it stood on end about her head—like a travestied aureole, from glory brought down to burlesque ?

This was a pleasure to her, she said. She liked nothing so well as to have her hair gently pulled while she was reading ; but she might have remembered the comical effect to those who saw her. I remember standing in the doorway for an instant, terrified, thinking that she had gone mad. But she called me to her in her smart, short, dislocated way ; and I sat there, while she gave me lessons on worldly wisdom and the little girl continued to pull out her staring locks.

Her good ponderous husband was also kind to me. He was a very dungeon of learning—I use the word intentionally—for, like a dungeon, for the most part he kept his treasures under lock and key, away from the daily light, and only at stated times made a grand gaol-delivery in his books. Still, he

was gentle and human and knew when to unbend; and though he did not take the initiative, he gave me valuable advice when I asked for it, and such information as I wanted, and in all things treated me like a rational being—though I must have been to him terribly embryonic and inchoate. At that time I was still lost in the pathless morass of comparative mythology, where, for want of the knowledge of Sanscrit and the true scientific method, I did no good to myself nor to others. And to M. Mohl, whose intellect was eminently practical and void of mysticism, my then fondness for ‘views’ and ‘theories’ must have been wearisome enough. In looking back over the past, the one thing which strikes me above all the rest is the wonder of the kindness I received from men and women of matured minds and well-plenished intellects—I, so crude, so fluid, so unformed as I must have been!

All who knew Parisian society then, and

for many years after, will remember the famous salon in the Rue du Bac, with its tea-table to the side; its pretty little Frenchwomen in smart white bonnets, well-fitting black silk gowns, and graceful cashmere shawls—which last they hung over the back of their chairs, thus avoiding the need of a cloak-room; its more formal English ladies in conventional evening dress; its wits and literary celebrities of all nations; its leaven of dull respectability to tone down the brilliant Bohemianism which sometimes filtered through the more orderly pores; its learned pundits and frivolous beauties; those three exquisite Americans—the mother even more beautiful than the daughter, and the sister and aunt the fairest of the triad, as the great Italian physician—he who afterwards became a senator in Rome—found to his cost; that high-couraged English girl, then one of the vanguard of the advanced women,

and now left behind in the rush of the movement; and the eccentricity of the hostess herself, equalled only by her goodness of heart and vivacity of brain. No one who was anyone at all was left out of that hospitable menagerie across the Seine; and perhaps no room has been the birth-place of more important private events than that of M. and Madame Mohl.

For myself, I met there many notable people and made some good friendships; among others that of William Rathbone Greg, one of our most brilliant men of the immediate past. His 'Creed of Christendom' had had an immense fascination for me, and his sparkling talk and pleasant personality completed the charm already begun. Certainly, he often rasped me by his tremendous assumption of superiority and the accusation of my own correlative folly. But he was so much older than I, so much more experienced in all matters

of thought and observation, and I was personally so sincerely attached to him, that I could bear his high-handed way of dealing with me with the equanimity befitting the inferior. Even when he said to me, with that smile we all know—half playful, half satirical:—‘ You have no right to hold another opinion when I have given you mine—I, one of the wisest of men—you, the most foolish of boys ’—even then I did not take fire, as it was in my nature to do, but accepted the antithesis as accurate in all its parts.

For which piece of good humour I earned his good will, and, as time went on, a more valuable measure of friendship. But to the last he counted it to me for blame that he could not influence me more than he did, and that I still cherished thoughts and hopes, specially about human progress and perfectibility, which he gave himself some trouble to destroy.

Earnestness in searching for truth has always this penalty to pay:—Everyone who is convinced of the rightness of his own views thinks he has but to put these views before you—clearly, forcibly, with the authority of his conviction—and that you will at once adopt them and go over to his side. When you do not, he is disappointed, displeased, and possibly changes his opinion of you altogether and ceases to be your friend.

This has been my experience again and again. I do not suppose many minds have been more laboriously worked over than has mine by those who, convinced in their own persons of this or that unprovable truth, have tried to make me see that light which for them has put out all the rest. And I never could! I was never able to see more than the spectroscopic lines which revealed constituents.

It never came to the point of severance



with my dear friend, the political Cassandra who thought he had found a satisfactory answer to so many of the Enigmas of Life, and that those which he could not explain were essentially insoluble. To the last of our intercourse he was an indulgent kind of Mentor, though I made but a recalcitrant and unsatisfactory Telemachus; and, if he never changed his opinion on my illimitable foolishness, he honoured me with his trust, his confidence, and in some sort his affection; and he knew, as he once said, that I was as true as steel to him and all other friends, and that my heart was sound if my head was not.

I also met the famous poet-couple, the husband and wife, of whom whereof in those days she was the more popular and famous. Now the 'whirligig' has reversed their respective positions, and his star is in the ascendant, gibbous and rough-edged as it is, while hers has comparatively declined. She was ✓

always very genial in manner to me when I saw her, but she did not like me. She wrote to a common friend, poor Fanny Haworth—she who just touched excellence at so many points and never quite achieved it — and her adverse verdict was rather severe.

‘I have seen your favourite boy, Christopher Kirkland,’ she said ; ‘and I do not like him. He is not true.’

When she talked to me she used to look at me through the dropping curtains of her long ringlets as if she would have read my secret soul. I used to feel as if I were on a moral dissecting-table, while she probed my thoughts and touched speculative tracts which probably seemed to her hopelessly wrong and corrupt. She did not show that she disliked nor distrusted me, but something about me must have jarred her highly strung sensitive nature.

I was very sorry when I knew what she

had said of me. I cannot remember anything of the kind which pained me more, and nothing has stung so deeply. If she had shown me her mind I would not have felt it so much ; but she did not ; and in those days I was young enough, and sincere enough, to take things as they seemed to be and to believe in appearances as realities. And, naturally affectionate as I was, with my heart on my sleeve, I credited those who acted towards me with kindness with the same sympathetic instincts as I myself possessed.

I had another adverse verdict flung at me at this time. There came to Paris a certain Dr. Hughes, who had taken for me one of those unfounded dislikes which sometimes blind even good men to the sense of fairness and justice. I had never seen him nor had he seen me ; but I suppose he had heard something against me ; and what he did not know he imagined—which does just

as well for that kind of antipathy which is based on conjecture, not intercourse. Finding that I was a friend in the house of some of his friends, he spoke of me strongly and bitterly, and made the husband at least believe that I was an atheist, a socialist of the worst type, the propagandist of all sorts of immoral and subversive opinions, and in no wise a safe nor fit comrade for young people.

Alarmed by this evil report, the husband wanted to forbid me the house; but the wife stood by me with all a good woman's courage of charity, and I was thus saved the pain of ostracism without knowing my offence. I was ignorant of the skirmish at the time, and only heard of it when the danger was past. Meanwhile, by my dear friend's clever management, I met Dr. Hughes in her salon and was straightway introduced to him—he, thus taken un-awares, being unable in common politeness to escape.

One of the strangest revulsions of feeling I have ever witnessed took place that night, and through my whole life I have never known so great a personal triumph. Frankly, it is to 'peacock myself' on this that I tell the story at all.

Knowing nothing of his hostility, and speaking to Dr. Hughes without suspicion or embarrassment, and as respectfully as I would to any one else of whom I had heard only good things and worthy, I won him over from enmity to liking, not conscious of what I was doing. To this hour I can see his eyes, deep-set, glittering, penetrating, full of fire and thought as they were, turned on me, doubting, questioning, and then with kindly glances, as we stood together for a long two hours on the balcony beneath the stars, and discussed many things of life and faith. And I can yet feel the touch of his broad hand on my shoulder when, as I turned to go back

into the room, he half held me so that I should look at him squarely, and said, smiling—and for all the sternness of his face and character his smile was sweet almost to pathos :

‘ I am glad I have seen you and talked with you face to face. I know you better now than I thought I did.’

Dr. Hughes was as unorthodox as I was myself. But he made up in increased moral austerity for his abandonment of old theological restraints. He was a political economist of the hardest, as he was a philosopher of the most ascetic, type. A broad strain of Scotch Puritanism ran through his nature, and he allowed no margin for ‘slopping over,’ no excursions into the forbidden regions of unlawful passion. He had forsworn Hades and he did not believe in the devil; but in his code materialism was virtually Satan, and looseness was the true region of dam-

nation. What he had heard or imagined of me made him believe that I slopped over at all four corners ; that I was a rank Materialist and a frank Epicurean ; and he felt bound to testify to the cloven foot he made sure was hidden within my boot.

In those days I was a fervent Deist and by no means an ethical latitudinarian ; though I confess I was so far a hedonist in that I thought happiness a human good, and pain and misery evils which it was our duty to avert from others when we could, and our wisdom to avoid for ourselves.

Besides those whom I have mentioned, I knew slightly Ary Scheffer ; I was once presented to Béranger, who was too closely surrounded by his intimates to give much thought to an outside stranger ; and I knew Daniele Manin. With this last indeed, my relations were friendly almost to intimacy ; and I used often to go and see him at his meagre rooms in the unfashionable

quarter where he lived. He was always wrapped in cloaks and blankets, and complained much of the cold ; but he was ever dignified and noble. His daughter was then in bad health. It was the sad beginning of the sadder end ; for when she died all that was essentially Manin died too, and the broken heart of the father put the finishing touch to the ruined career of the patriot.

More than anyone I have known Manin made me feel the disadvantage of domestic affections when a man is the leader of a cause, and how far wiser it is for those who are self-consecrated to the service of humanity to keep free from family ties. This loneliness within allows of so much the more activity without. It made part of the secret of Mazzini's enduring power ; and Manin, without the heart-break of his desolated home, might have been for years longer an active agent in that Italian



Unity which came too late for him to share in its glory and its triumph.

At this time I was poor rather than well off, and I had to live modestly if I would live honourably. Hence I had my eyrie on the fifth floor, where I shared the apartment of a young fellow a few years older than myself. His French mother and Irish father were dead—the latter quite lately—and his sole inheritance was the lease of this apartment for the five years it had to run. We lived a rough kind of life; but at our age roughnesses did not count. An old woman used to come in the morning to ‘faire le ménage’ for the day; after which we were left to ourselves. We had to take our meals out of doors, save the ‘premier déjeuner’ of bread and coffee; and we had only two rooms—one each. But our friends used to toil up those five flights to visit us. Men of note, women of condition, young fellows like ourselves—they all came to

make merry or to talk seriously, as the humour took them. Among the rest I remember Mr. Thackeray coming here to see me ; and the good-humoured way in which he sat on the flat-topped black box, not to disturb the mass of papers heaped on my second chair, was especially delightful. Mr. Greg also used to come ; but he generally fell foul of my hundred and ninety steps ; and it was here that I first saw Henry Wills, who, with his wife, afterwards became one of my dearest friends.

My young landlord, Léon O'Byrne, had a small employment somewhere—I never knew what it was nor where. His only sister was governess in an old Legitimist family of high rank and fortune—the Marquis and Marquise de Boiscourt. Through Léon I became acquainted with these charming people, whom I was fortunate enough to please. Madame la Marquise was specially good to me ; and we soon

became fast friends. She always wore a broad gold bracelet, which one day she took off and showed me. It contained a lock of hair, underneath which was engraved: 'Mon roi. Henri Cinq.' There was also a date, which I forget. Perhaps it was that of his birth, or of his visionary accession; in any case it was a sacred memory. The outside of the bracelet bore the crown of France surmounting the letter H,—both wrought in diamonds.

I often went to the Boiscourt Hotel in the Faubourg St. Germain; and I met there the then famous Jasmin, the Provençal barber, whose 'papillotes' were the fashion among the fine ladies, somewhat as the works of Barnes, our Dorsetshire poet, were the fashion here in London a few years ago. Jasmin had been invited to give a reading of his poems to a select circle, wherein I had been generously included. All the ladies wept; and Jasmin himself wept more

copiously than did they. He was begged to repeat one of the poems—the one which had most moved his audience and himself; and I was rather amused to note how his voice broke on exactly the same words, how he wept at exactly the same passages, and how the whole of the second reading was the precise echo of the first. Not an intonation, not a gesture, not a look nor emphasis was in any way changed; and this second reading, in destroying all appearance of spontaneity, destroyed all vestige of illusion.

Madame la Marquise was naturally a profound believer in the saints. She told me that if ever I lost anything I was to pray to St. Anthony of Padua, and he would find it for me. She instanced the truth of this heavenly interposition by telling me how, a week ago, she had lost her diamond necklace. She had been out to a soirée, and when she left her carriage and went upstairs,

her necklace was gone. They searched everywhere for it, but in vain. Then she prayed to St. Anthony of Padua, and promised him a candle if he would help her. The next morning her diamonds were found in the courtyard, just there where she had stepped from her carriage. If that was not confirmation strong, what was or could be?

She was kind enough to ask me to spend some time at her country house, where I went with Léon, and where I enjoyed myself immensely. But perhaps this was more on account of the novelty of all I saw than because of the intrinsic pleasantness of the arrangements. Things to which I have become accustomed now, and which are as natural to me as old home habits, were then strange and unusual; and my faculty of observation, always alert, had enough to occupy it.

The family, Legitimist and devout to their finger-tips, lived in that quasi-patriarchal

style which only exists in families of high rank where relative positions are too sharply defined for any kind of blurring to be possible, and which is clearly a survival of serfdom and seigneurial prepotency. The upper servants had lived all their lives in the family; and the younger ones, who were the children of peasants on the estate, training under the direction of their elders, would not have dared to have given up their places, to which they were also destined for the whole of their natural lives.

These old upper servants were familiar and affectionate, but never disrespectful nor presumptuous: they were simply the inferior members of the household, but always integral to the family. The old butler used to mingle in the conversation at table while handing round the dishes. He would confirm what M. le Marquis said, and put Madame la Marquise right when she blundered; or he would contradict M. Wil-

frid when he spoke at random, as boys will ; or he would tell me what I ought to eat with a kind of humane condescension to an outside barbarian and heretic that was infinitely amusing. Every day, after the second breakfast, at twelve o'clock precisely, he, the lady's-maid, and the housekeeper, used to go out for a formal walk down the avenue. This was as much part of the day's doings as that second breakfast itself. The lady's-maid sat with Madame la Marquise in her bedroom ; and the two talked together as they sewed in concert more like sisters than mistress and maid. Madame la Marquise, always superbly dressed, did not disdain a host of unseen economies never practised by Englishwomen of a certain status. But one of her many complaints against Englishwomen was their extravagance in the unseen parts of dress, such as linings and the like. Another was the wicked way in which they crumpled their

skirts and spoilt them generally by unhandy usage.

That bedroom of Madame la Marquise was a great rendezvous for us all. She had been in England, and she had instituted four o'clock tea—not then so general as it is now—where we had buttered toast ‘à l’Anglaise,’ which they all preferred to cake. M. le Marquis and the young men used to come to these symposia in shirt-sleeves, and without waistcoats. And it made no difference that Mademoiselle Sara, Léon’s sister and the governess to Mademoiselle Berthe, the only girl, was there; or that Madame la Marquise herself was in a *déshabille* startling in its buttonless intimacy or what Italians call ‘*confidenza*.’

M. Wilfrid, the youngest son, did not often join us. He was still under tuition, and in the care of M. l’Abbé, who literally never let him out of his sight, never allowed him to be away from him one moment, day



nor night, except when he was with his mother. The boy was then seventeen; and I think our average schoolboys would have set him down laconically as an 'awful duffer.' I used to pity him for what was substantially a life of slavery, for a strictness of surveillance beyond that which we think necessary for our girls. It seemed to me an enervating, emasculating thing all through, and ill-calculated to make a man of the best type.

Indeed, I did not think much of the essential manliness of any of the young men. They were all '*petits maîtres*,' dissipated rather than energetic, and with the strangest mixture possible of indifference, unbelief and superstition in religious matters. I remember my unbridled contempt for the little round kind of summer-house in the garden, wherein the sportsman shuts himself, with loop-holes for sight and aim, whence, after having scattered seed all about for the birds,

he can pot them comfortably as they feed on the ground. After our honest sport on marsh and moor and stubble-field, this miserable pretence was cousin-german to a crime.

We 'made maigre' three times a week—Wednesday, Friday and Saturday—and we were devout members of the Church in every way. Since a dangerous illness of *Made-moiselle Berthe*, when she was 'vouée au bleu et au blanc' for two years, with great gifts promised to the Virgin should she recover, *Madame la Marquise* had 'entered into the way of religion,' and she carried her family with her. This did not prevent some frightful scandal attaching to one of her sons whose name was never mentioned, and who had gone across the seas, heaven knows where; nor the dissipation of the eldest; nor the want of moral principle in every direction of the nephew whom she had brought up as her own son, and who

combined the most extraordinary amount of 'fastness' with the most wonderful apparent docility to 'ma tante'; nor the Jove-like gallantries of M. le Marquis, whose amourettes were as notorious as they were numerous. The pretty post-mistress of the village, whose appointment was owing to him, for all that he stood aloof from the Emperor and all his works—the curly-headed children he danced on his knees and set to hunt for bonbons in his capacious pockets—this young girl and that young wife—M. le Marquis indemnified himself in lordly manner enough for the enforced asceticism to which Madame la Marquise condemned him!

And no one thought the worse of him. He and his wife were perfectly good friends; and what she knew was her own affair only. Her blameless life did not allow of recriminations, even if she made reproaches, which it was very likely she did not make;

and the two went on together in apparently perfect harmony and accord, and 'ma femme' was the first care, consideration, and centralized authority with M. le Marquis, who, while he amused himself, took care not to hurt her.

I was at first amused, but soon became bored, by the limp invertebrate pleasures which diverted the household. *Ecarté*, where the stakes were bonbons; billiards, without science or precision, and merely so much child's play—these were the two great resources of the evening. But when they were alone the young men indemnified themselves by their talk, which was all of Paris, the Boulevards, the theatres, *Mabille* and women, flavoured with a ripeness of experience as strong as the absinthe of which they had a secret store not sparingly used. This was the first time I heard it plainly stated that the virtue of women is not man's affair, and that he is a fool who

does not profit when and where he can. A girl ought to be looked after by her mother ; a young wife by her husband ; a woman of maturer age must take care of herself. In no case does it fall within the duty of a man to protect or respect her. When I had first heard of the extraordinary precautionstaken by French mothers and gouvernantes for the efficient protection of young girls, I had been both indignant and amazed. It had seemed to me an insult to everyone concerned. But I have somewhat modified my views since then ; and I think a few barriers in early life not quite needless, even among ourselves.

On the whole, I was not sorry when my prescribed fortnight came to an end. I had got all the good I could get out of the novelty of the thing, and I was tired of the flaccidity of life as laid down in that unpicturesque, dead-alive old place. But I was sorry to part from Madame la Marquise,

whose kindness to me had been almost maternal; for all that I knew she was afraid of my freer English habits and more independent modes of thought, and would as soon have thrust Mademoiselle Berthe into a lion's den as have trusted her to me for one minute alone. Still, she was so thoroughly well-bred and so good that she never made me feel uncomfortable because uncovenanted. I divined, rather than was shown experimentally, the state of her mind; and, though naturally it was not pleasant to me, it was only what was to be expected from her.

I remember, however, being considerably exercised one day by the contempt with which she spoke of the English for their 'romantic marriages.' Marrying for love without sufficient means, preferring the person to settlements and affection to ambition, was to her one of the seven deadly social sins for which was no forgive-

ness. A runaway match with a detrimental was an infinitely worse crime in a girl than was the most flagrant infidelity in a wife ; and the unpracticality of romance counted for more than the immorality of vice.

This too, was one of those new views which, when first heard, make an ineffaceable mark on the mind. They add a strand to the skein, certainly ; but at the moment they shock, repel, and give a general sense of instability to everything. And when Madame la Marquise first launched forth against love in favour of convenience in marriage, I seemed to be listening to the wildest kind of moral treason, and wondered how any good woman could hold such awful principles. Now, in my old age, I have come to think that a great deal is to be said for the French method of marriage-making, tenderly and judiciously carried out ; and that the blind impulses of inexperienced passion are not

quite the solid foundations for happiness it is the fashion in England to assume them to be ; but that knowledge and reason and foresight come in here, as in every other fact of human life ; and that niceness of daily habits, and ease from the carking cares of impecuniosity, go far to render existence endurable, even in the absence of the ideal.







## CHAPTER VI.

**W**HEN I went back to Paris, I fell in with that beautiful and most unhappy woman whose head and neck were so strangely the human representation of the Ionic column, and who was one of the most pronounced of the man-haters and woman-defenders of her time. Sex with her determined everything. To be a man was to be a monster; to be a woman was to be probably a saint and certainly a victim. The most manifest perjury, if of a woman against a man, she received without examination and believed without doubt; and she justified all

viragoes on the ground of the provocation received by the sex, if not individually by themselves—a provocation which called for and glorified reprisals and revenge.

Through her I knew one who had been in her day the most famous of our tragic actresses, till she married and made herself the most miserable of wives, and her husband as wretched as herself. The deep voice and stage-stateliness of manner, the assumption of supremacy and really cruel strength of this lady, crushed me flat. The way in which she levelled her big black eyes at me, and calmly put her foot on me, was an experience never to be forgotten. The pitiless brutality of her contradictions ; her scathing sarcasm ; her contemptuous taunts, knowing that I was unable to answer her ; the way in which she used her matured powers to wound and hurt my even then immature nature, gave me a

certain shuddering horror for her, such as I fancy a man would feel for one who had flayed him in the market-place. I am thankful to Fate which never threw us together again.

Years after, I knew her yet more gifted sister in Rome. She was a very different person—as womanly as this other was virile; as sweet and generous and sympathetic as this other was arbitrary, insolent, and inhuman. A characteristic little trait of the former was told me, instancing, to my way of thinking, the stony and unyielding quality of her mind. She was used to number all her dresses and hang them up in rows. If it came to the turn of her gold tissue to be worn, she would wear it, though she might be going to a simple family dinner; if it were the turn for a morning silk, she would wear that, though she had to appear at a stately ball. This was her method of expressing order; and in this

apparently insignificant little habit may be seen the germ of all she was and did, and the cause of all she suffered and made others suffer.

My lady the Ionic column was continually going over to Paris, which she anathematized when she got there. She used to say with vehemence that it was the worst city in the world ; and I have seen her shudder with horror as she spoke. As I had not then peeped behind the screen, I thought her both prejudiced and fantastical, as well as illogical for voluntarily living so much in a place she held to be good only for fiends and satyrs. I used to listen to her with frank amazement. Taken up as I was with my work, and satisfied with life as it came to me on the broad highway, I had neither time nor inclination for excursions into dark passages and shameful byways. Therefore I had seen nothing of all the vice she so strongly

deprecated, and I did not believe in it. Moreover, I thought it then, and I think it now, the wisest plan to take the apparent good as it offers itself, and leave untouched those hidden evils which do not of themselves leap to our eyes, and with which we have no official concern.

Certainly I went about a little to doubtful places, as all young people do. Mabilles was then in its glory; La Closerie des Lilas was just opened; and the Bals de l'Opera were also things for strangers to see. The students and grisettes who danced the can-can and did their extraordinary steps at these places, seem to me to have been different from the men and women who haunt the public dancing-halls to-day. The fun and frolic, if decidedly fast and more than 'risqué,' was more spontaneous, less professional, less commercial and calculated than now, and the whole style of thing was simpler. It was all the difference between the grisette and

the cocotte—the student of the Quartier Latin and the ‘petit crêvé’ of the Boulevard Italien.

One painful and horrible face dwells in my memory. I forget the man’s name, but he had been the wealthy son of a master-baker, who had ruined himself at Mabilles and all that this represented. He was now an old man, penniless, and supported by the charity of the Administration on which he had spent his large inheritance; but, old as he was, he danced with the lightness of a youth and the look and bearing of a satyr. His face was entirely that of the legendary satyr; and I looked for the pointed ears and goat’s legs. He was the most suggestive and degraded specimen of European humanity possible to see, and might have been taken as a living text for any number of sermons you will.

My greatest pleasure, however, was not found in dancing-places, but in the quiet

country about Paris. I used to go for long walks and excursions to Vincennes and Versailles, St. Germain, and Fontainebleau, Asnières, Ville d'Avray, and the like; and I was never so happy as when noting some new aspect of nature. For among the contradictions with which my life is full is that of the most passionate love for nature and voluntary residence in towns. From quite early childhood I had this delight in nature, and I remember things which struck me even when I was so small a boy that I was frightened by finding myself alone in the garden :—as, that dark cloud which hung over our ‘burgomaster’ mountain to the north, while the vale below and the hills around were bathed in sunshine ; that double rainbow which spanned the whole vale ; those big drops of the thunder-shower ; the revelation of folds and secondary peaks in the mountains opposite by a sudden outburst of sunlight, and then the sinking back

into an undifferentiated mass when that sunlight passed. I cannot date the first times when I noticed these phenomena; but they were in quite early days, standing out from the chaotic darkness of the rest. I remember when I first noted the different shapes of certain buds of trees, *e.g.*, the difference between those of the horse-chestnut and the lime; I can yet put back certain rosebushes and honeysuckles found in the hedges; and, if it still exists as a field, I could walk straight to that corner of the field where I once found what I suppose must have been an oxlip. But it is more than fifty years since I have seen the place.

I remember the smell of the laurestinus and the bay-trees the first evening we arrived at my father's Kentish home; and the kind of awe with which those two cedars in the shrubbery opposite inspired me. I remember certain days of snowstorm when the fast-falling flakes were driven before the



pitiless wind, and I gave them the pain of hunted creatures as they were hounded on—now in eddying circles, and now in straight lines. I remember how the rain one day came down like a white sheet at Eden; and I can still see my father going through the garden gate to Sunday morning duty, struggling against the wind, and half shrouded within the cascade of rain, of which also I remember thinking it was a return of the Deluge. Certain sunsets are yet plainly visible to my mental eye; and the new flowers I found in the fields and woods and waste places about Paris are photographed on my memory, as are the sunsets and the flowers of later years, seen and found in beloved Italy.

And yet, the rush and grandeur of human life in London and Paris, and the sense of being in the heart of all this emotional and intellectual movement, were more fascinating to me than even the beauty and the

peace of nature. Hence the want of consistency which has marked my career from first to last has its part in the apparent contradiction of delighting in every circumstance and manifestation of nature, and electing to live in cities.

Through Léon O'Byrne I became acquainted with a typical Frenchwoman of a certain kind—one Mademoiselle Cléonice. Though in a small way, she was the real 'femme de commerce' of Paris; and to know her was to know a whole class. She was about thirty-five years of age, trim, neat, plump, tight, sharp. She was not pretty when dissected bit by bit, but she was 'arranged' with such faultless taste as to be charming and attractive on the whole. She was always dressed in black silk or soft black stuff, without frills or furbelows of any kind; and her gowns had that wonderful look of having been moulded on her, like a second skin, which

is so peculiarly French. She wore linen collars and cuffs of scrupulous whiteness; round her neck was a small narrow handkerchief tied in a bow; and the smartest and prettiest kind of cap, made of filmy lace trimmed with pink ribbon, took off the severity of her smoothly braided blue-black hair. She was the trimmest and best got up little woman of the quarter, and was never seen with a thread awry.

She lived in the small room behind her smaller shop, where she sold laces, caps, embroidery and other feminine finery; and her room was as neat as herself. The mahogany bed was in an alcove concealed by curtains; the toilet apparatus was in a dark closet to the side. The mahogany furniture and crimson velvet chairs; the white muslin curtains tied with pink ribbon, hour-glass fashion; the ormolu clock and candelabra on the marble chimney-piece; the chimney-glass and marble-topped mahogany

drawers; the red velvet sofa and the red velvet *fauteuil*—all were signs of *bien-être*, approaching to luxury for one of her class; and all were of a cleanliness, an order, that was of itself artistic poverty and scientific beauty.

Her way of life was typical. She lived absolutely alone, without a servant or assistant; but a 'femme de journée' came every morning to sweep and dust; a man from the street took down and put up her shutters; her food was sent in from a 'traiteur's' hard by; and when she wanted a holiday, she put up her shutters, locked the door, took the key in her pocket, and was free of all restraints. Thus she kept her apartment intact and undisturbed, and where she hid away her loose ends was a marvel.

In manner she was at once fascinating and provocative, petulant and caressing. She had a high-pitched voice and an irrit-

able way of speaking, as if always somewhat injured by some one and always complaining of something. Her temper was uncertain and easily ruffled, though it was never violent and as little enthusiastic; and her whole life was based on calculation. Passions, affections, chances, duties, sins, self-restraint, or the reverse, all made a sum in the living arithmetic of her days—so much to be gained by such and such an action, so much to be lost. She could not have loved nor hated without this balancing of her mental books; and of all the people ever known to me, she was the least spontaneous. She was also slanderous and spiteful to an appalling extent, and could not speak well of anyone. According to her, all the women she knew were ‘*drôleuses*,’—all the men ‘*coquins*,’ when not ‘*vauriens*’ nor brigands. She despised the English, now for their mathematical coldness, now, like Madame la Marquise, for their unmathema-

tical romance. The Italians she considered sinks of iniquity as fathomless as the Pit whence they came and whither they would return. But her own people were even worse; and of the ten righteous men who might have saved Paris, could they but be found, she denied the existence of more than one. Of one person only she forebore to speak evil, though she also never committed herself so far as to speak good.

This was a certain M. Bolivard, an elderly man, who wore very loose clothes and a very white waistcoat; obese, loose-lipped, sharp-eyed; with a skin like yellow ivory, and a black head, clipped close like a clothes-brush. He was the landlord, patron, and book-keeper of the trim little 'lingère,' and came regularly on Wednesday and Saturday evenings to inspect her accounts and see how she was getting on. On these days she was always in an atrocious humour, and Léon, who was a

pet of hers, was forbidden her place after four in the afternoon, as if he would have brought the plague.

From Mademoiselle Cléonice I learnt a good deal about the commercial class all round ; and if half she told me were true, and the present is like the past, Zola has not exaggerated. The corruption of the 'petite bourgeoisie' is as complete as that of the 'haute volée ;' and no strokes are too broad, no ink too black, by which the inventory of their vices is made. But her own vice of slander made me hesitate before I believed all the rest, and the homely old saying about the pot and the kettle took off a good layer of soot from the latter. Still, she was a bright little companion, so far as she went ; and if she went no deeper than the froth in champagne, it was always champagne that frothed ; and her repartee was as smart as her mind was shallow.

The most important of my Parisian friends, however, was Madame de Clairvaux, a Parisienne born and bred, who knew Paris and the whole art and mystery of life there, as she used to say, 'comme sa poche.' Her revelations were even more startling than those of Mademoiselle Cléonice, and more trustworthy, because neither spiteful nor made for the purpose of a disguise. She made them quite freely and impartially, almost scientifically. As I was young, a man of letters and a student of humanity, she said I ought to know the truth of things. And though I thought I did, pretty accurately, I certainly did not know so much before Madame de Clairvaux undertook to enlighten me as I did after.

The apotheosis of the demi-monde was just then beginning. The 'Dame aux Camellias,' with Madame Doche and Fechter as Marguerite and Armand, had made all Paris weep, and had still further loosened



the joints of its never too stiffly buckramed virtue. But it seemed to me impossible to know where the demi-monde began and where it left off, save in the matter of public notoriety. Of Madame de Clairvaux's own friends—all women of good family, good social standing and apparent repute—there was not one who did not belong to that famous basket of speckled peaches—not one who had not qualified herself for condemnation on account of that Damyan of hers hidden among the leaves.

Some of Madame de Clairvaux's stories were wonderfully graphic and romantic; and some read hardly like truth as we have it in this sober age of prose and commerce. For instance, that anecdote of Madame de Niemand—who kept her lover for six weeks in secret in the loft of her country-house, while her husband was absent, and only she, her child and her sister, were at Ville Saint-Jean; the droll

expedients she had to adopt to give him food, fresh air and exercise ; her foraging expeditions in the kitchen at night, after the servants had gone to bed ; the cook's amazement at the disappearance of his stores, and the awful burden which that midnight appetite of ' *Mademoiselle Marie ma sœur* ' had to bear ; the rambles in the woods and grounds, under the stars, of the two lovers who more than once were taken for ' *lutins* ' and ' *les dames blanches*,' and once ran great risk of being fired on as robbers ; and the wild mad happiness of the time—it was a romance from preface to colophon. But had it been written in a novel, the critics would have been down on the author as an absurd bungler who imagined things out of the line of possibility. Yet it was all true ; and Madame de Clairvaux knew it. Another time Madame de Niemand, who was as beautiful as an angel, slipped away from a ball where she was and her lover

was not. He was a poor artist, by the way, and lived in a garret. Suddenly there appeared before him a vision which, for a moment, he took to be unreal. Madame de Niemand in her ball-dress of pale pink and silver, her cloak thrown off, her hands held out, stood there in that dingy garret like the incarnation of beauty, love and riches ; and for a moment he lost his senses and swooned at her feet. The contrast between his poverty and her splendour was too great, and the joy, so unexpected, was too strong.

The little daughter born of this intrigue was the husband's favourite of the whole family, and the one in whom he took the greatest pride. As for suspicion of his wife, he had not the faintest trace. On the contrary, with this child on his knee he said to his friend, the lover in question :

‘Of one thing I am perfectly sure, Emmeline has never deceived me.’

‘You may swear that by the life of your mother,’ said the lover calmly, laying his hand caressingly on the child’s fair head.

‘So much for the pretty theory of natural affection and the instincts,’ said Madame de Clairvaux when she had finished, with an odd smile, and a rapid glance at Henri and Alphonsine, playing demurely in the corner—Henri the rosy blondin, the very counterpart of her fair Norman husband, while his little sister was as black as a morella cherry.

She told me many other things—always on the same lines ; till I began to feel that no such thing as womanly virtue nor manly constancy was left in the world, and that Mrs. Hulme was right:—It was only a question of the eleventh commandment and the comparative security of the door.

During my stay in France I went to a pension near Tours, where M. and Madame de Blainville, and M. and Madame Saint-

Georges, were living. M. de Blainville was, and had been for many years, 'le bon ami' of Madame Saint-Georges. Meanwhile, he had married and she had cooled. He had not. He had married for money, and his love remained intact. As for principle, that did not come into the arrangement. In this house I fell into the heart of mysteries and intrigues, where I was used now as a tool and now as a mask; and where, in the beginning, I understood nothing, neither what I did nor what I concealed, nor yet what was passing around me.

It was emphatically diamond cut diamond with M. de Blainville and Madame Saint-Georges; a game at chess with lives and hearts for pawns and queens, a duel 'à outrance,' where the rapiers were none the less deadly at the points for being covered with velvet at the hilts. Madame Saint-Georges had transferred her affections from

her old lover, whose marriage she had never forgiven, to a handsome young fellow in the neighbourhood, to whom such an adventure was a godsend. M. de Blainville, suspecting what was going on, set his wits to work to prove what he feared. He had the light tread and the supple spring of a panther, and no one ever knew where he was nor where he might not appear when least expected. He used to say that he was going away for the whole day, but he would conceal himself in the branches of a tree which served as a kind of watch-tower whence he could see all that went on; and night and day he stole about the house and grounds, noiselessly, untiringly, watching with the vigilance of jealousy for the moment of conviction. I lived on the ground-floor; and I slept with my windows open; safe against intruders by strong iron stanchions and bars. Often at dead of night I used to be awakened

by M. de Blainville suddenly calling me by my name; and two or three times during the morning, as I sat there doing my work, a shadow would fall across my paper, and I would look up to see those dark gleaming eyes shining from beneath the broad sombrero as M. de Blainville said to me curtly 'Good-day,' and passed on, satisfied that I at least was innocently employed.

At last he was rewarded. During one of his nocturnal prowls, when he was believed to be in Paris and had been hidden all day in the woods, he saw a rope-ladder hanging down from a certain window, not too high for a courageous man's leap. Up this ladder he crept like a cat, and sprang lightly into the room. There was a woman's smothered cry; a dumb struggle between two men; then a bold leap into the dark; and Madame Saint-Georges had lost the game.

That winter in Paris was a tremendous thermometrical experience. The water used to be frozen hard in my tub, and I have often cut myself as with a knife with the icicles in my sponge. One day my milk froze on the top of my inefficient stove; and I never knew cold as I knew it then. But it was all experience, both moral and physical, both social and ethical.

After about two years of this strange life I was summoned back to England at a moment's notice; and I had to leave just in time to escape some unpleasantness to this day unverified. A general illumination had been ordered for the Emperor's birthday, and each householder had been warned to light all his lamps and candles, and make as brave a show in his window and on the balconies as was possible. In my Republican pride and youthful folly I declined to add my quota; and my special window remained dark. The next day I was summoned to



appear at the Prefecture. As I was leaving that night, and the summons was for the next day, I could not go.

So the thing passed, and I heard no more of it. I knew that I had committed no crime and broken no law ; though now I acknowledge that I had offended against good-breeding in refusing to conform to the regulations of the country which gave me hospitality. The fact, however, of being ' wanted by the police ' was in itself a little disturbing, and I was glad to be out of it. The Empire had a long arm and a heavy hand ; and if I was hot-headed and absurd, the Government was tyrannous and unscrupulous ; and between the two it was I who would have got worst off.





## CHAPTER VII.

**M**Y Parisian experiences changed my point of view in more things than one, and in nothing more than on the marriage question. People would say those experiences had corrupted me. Perhaps so. For sure it is that from this time I have thought the laxity which reigns in society comes less from the corruption of the human heart than because life is too monotonous here, or the laws are too strict there. That is, I have learnt to condemn results less than to reason on causes.

With belief in direct revelation dies out

the divinity of laws as they stand. One gets to see that all society is built up by experiments, and that the final word has not been said on anything. One gets to see too, that, although to obey existing laws is the duty of every citizen, to change them is the right of the community and to criticize them that of the individual. Without doubt there is a better and a worse, a higher and a lower; but nothing is absolutely final; and that 'fourth dimension' may be applied to society as well as to space, and to morals and even matrimony as to other things. I saw that in Roman Catholic countries the sublime theory of the sacramental quality of marriage is wholly inoperative in practice, and that this is none the more sacred because it is indissoluble. On the contrary, the unyielding nature of the tie forces consideration for human weakness; and adultery is condoned because divorce is impossible. ✓

The matrimonial ideal of the one love for life, beginning in youth, enduring through maturity to old age, and ending only with death, is of course the purest and noblest basis of the family. Extremes meeting, we see this condition fulfilled in those elemental states of society where wants are few, the intellect is undeveloped, the sphere restricted, and the instincts, satisfied, leave no room for vagrant imagination—where in fact, there is no imagination to go astray. But in a complex and widely differentiated society like ours—where men cannot marry when young and women cannot marry where they would; where the highly developed nervous organization of the race makes compatibility difficult to find and incompatibility impossible to bear; where women's domestic life is cramping and monotonous, the development of trade having robbed it of half its duties and all its variety—post-nuptial dissatisfaction is fatally common for both

men and women alike. Hence, facility of divorce by robbing inconstancy of its falsehood and substituting the honest confession of incompatibility for the shameful detection of crime, is not only a just relief, but is also an accumulation of virtue for the community. Thus, though I have never gone so far as those who would have no bond outside inclination, I have, since my Paris days, gone as far as those countries which allow of divorce by mutual consent and without the necessity of committing a crime to procure relief.

These views are not considered now so subversive as they were when I was young and before the passing of our own Divorce Law, which at least gives easily to the poor what had been possible only with difficulty to the rich. Liberty of opinion has made great strides since then, in spite of the persecutions which have lately disgraced us; but we must never forget that these strides

were first marked out by those who had the courage to speak plainly and aloud, and the constancy to submit to the moral obloquy which was their reward. Every time has its fetishes which must not be touched with a profane hand, nor discussed as to their meaning or substance. To the Greek, his sacred Xoana were mystical representations of the unseen gods and not battered old blackened blocks of wood ; to the Catholic peasant, the Miraculous Virgin of the Santuario is the direct Giver of Health, the Healer by its own intrinsic power, and not a hideous daub with as little art as divinity ; to the seminarist, his guardian angel is a fact and not a poetic dream ; to the pious savage, thunder is the voice of his god and the doctrine of an Impersonal Force would be impiety and patent falsehood ; and to us, our existing laws on marriage—not to go farther afield—are as sacred and as unalterable as are all

those material fetishes to their worshippers ; and he who discusses the one or the other from the ground-work of development and the point of view of expediency is an infidel and profane.

And yet my old friend Mrs. Hulme was right. There is no absolute ; and we shall have to try back and go forward many times yet before we reach perfection.

No man can say that all things are perfect as they are, even in Protestant monogamous England ; and the cuckoo-cry of the wickedness of the human heart is an excuse, not a reason. The worst possible legislation is that which multiplies unnecessary restrictions, and thus creates artificial offences. The best is that which leaves the individual unchecked liberty up to the point which harms no one. For legislation, like everything else, develops and matures, passing from the absolutism necessary for infancy to the freedom of the

full-grown man. So it will some day be with marriage—when the command : ‘ You shall not, how much soever you may desire,’ shall give place to the wider line : ‘ You are the best judge for yourself.’

I have dwelt on this subject so long because it was one of those which had the most fatal influence over my future life. I was more or less a moral derelict everywhere ; but here I was not only abandoned, but actively accursed as well.

The young man’s fancies that we know of ran lightly in those days in the direction natural to my age. My position was sufficiently good to make marriage possible, and I had begun to feel the lodgings into which I had gone when the old boarding-house came to grief both lonely and oppressive. To be sure, all that Parisian experience had been a little deterring, not to say intimidating ; but who believes that his neighbour’s history will be his own ? All women were



not discursive, and faithful wives and honest mothers were still to be found. I set myself, therefore, to look for that which never comes when sought, and I did my best to fall in love with one or other of the girls I knew—chiefly, of course, amongst the advanced class.

Somehow, each failed to satisfy my taste all through. I was a Republican, granted ; but I was also a gentleman. I did not think then, and I do not think now, that Republicanism or Freethinking exempts us from the obligation of the most perfect courtesy, the most exquisite moral refinement. On the contrary. The more you respect yourself, which is the key-note of Republicanism, the more you will respect others ; and the less you recognise divine command in the things of life, the more you will be careful to maintain the very minutiae of moral delicacy. It is laid on you to prove to others that this spotless grace and deli-

cacy—this stately moral heroism—is the natural development of the moral sense, human and intrinsic, not taught from without. Far from brutal disregard or slipshod license, the Republican and Free-thinker is bound to be more courteous and more self-restrained than others. He has only himself for his own diploma. It behoves him, then, to be careful of both parchment and endorsement.

But, I confess it with a certain sense of shame—a certain sense of ethical unmanliness in a fastidiousness which looked like disloyalty to my flag—all these girls of the emancipated class sinned, or in grace and good breeding, or in the more serious qualifications for domestic life. They were clever and bright-witted; some were pretty and some were good; but either they were not conventionally ladies or they were not trustworthy as future wives.

There was Henrietta, tall, handsome,

brilliant, vigorous—a fine kind of nineteenth-century Diana in a duffel coat with big buttons and outside pockets. She gave music lessons, to help her mother's narrow income. So far, this was to her honour. But the life of the streets, and the independence, freedom and breaking up of all domestic habits engendered thereby, were destructive of more than regularity of hours. She was a brave accentuated creature ; an ardent Republican ; a passionate woman's rights woman ; a potential martyr for liberty of thought and freedom of action ; the kind of woman to be of priceless value in a revolution, when she would have ridden fifty miles at a stretch to carry papers, at the risk of her life, past the enemy's lines ; a woman to take the lead and keep it ; a woman in her own right—'maîtresse-femme' from head to heel ; good for action, for courage, for devotion and a hundred other heroic virtues. But for the monotony of

domestic life? for the small submissions of wifehood? the larger self-sacrifices of maternity? No! she was not fitted for these! When custom should have staled the first freshness of love, and the inevitable reaction should have set in, she would then have gone back to her old habits, to her vagabond life, to her delight in her sense of freedom and self-support, to her quasi-masculinity of custom, and her independence of hours and duties. And her own home would be the place where she would be seen least.

Then there was Laura, good, sweet-tempered, orderly, conformable. But she had not a thought higher than the lowest mole-heap of practical utility. She would have steeped herself in her domestic duties till nothing else was left. Her soul would have simmered away in the stew-pan; and that basket of needlework would have engulfed every vestige of her intellect. She

would have sunk into the place of a fair and gentle servant ; and I wanted my wife to be my companion, not only my hand-maiden.

Again, there was Kate, that passionate and desolate little virgin disgraced by fortune and worthy of a better fate. She was lame, but very sweet and lovely in the face ; a spiritual, self-consuming, enthusiastic flame of fire, with a soul that wore out her body and hidden passions that burned her as it were alive. I was very fond of her, and she liked me ; but she was my friend, not my lover, and never could be.

For worldly advantages Miss Daniels was the largest prize in the lottery ; and I knew, without vanity, that I had only to stretch out my hand, when she would put herself and all she possessed into it. She ‘ called cousins,’ as she expressed it, with my old idol, King Dan, but—those buts !—she was seven years older than I, and

of portentous plainness. She was perfectly well-bred and extremely well-educated ; and she had fifteen hundred a year. But it wanted only one or two little lines to make her face that of a dromedary. And with my sensuous temperament some share of beauty was an essential.

Theresa, sweet and seductive, had not quite a clean bill of moral health ; and I did not care to come second. Mary was grace incarnate, but she was mad about display, and thought the only propaganda of advanced opinions to touch the world was to be made by diamonds and dinners. No ! none of them would do. They were all deciduous ; and my fancies fell like autumn leaves. I was desperately in love for four-and-twenty hours ; and then I came out at the other side and recognised the impossibility of things.

This happened so often, that I began to believe myself incapable of anything like a

serious or sustained passion. Had I then exhausted my heart in that one early out-flow? was I now nothing but a bit of moral thistle-down, ever floating and never able to root?

When I saw Cordelia Gilchrist the whole panorama of my life changed, and I fell in love with her in that intense way which is almost like possession. It was not because of her beauty, for, save a tall and graceful figure, perfect hands and feet, and large deep blue or rather violet-coloured Irish eyes, she had no beauty, properly so called. But she had that irresistible fascination which is more than mere loveliness of feature. To see her was to love her; to love her was more than a liberal education—it was to touch the sublimest moral heights. Had I been able to forecast all that had to come, I would have done as I did, in spite of the anguish involved. I loved her as a man of my character would

perforce love the woman he found in every way supreme, and whom he rejoiced to own his superior. I loved her with tenderness and reverence combined ; with the love of a man and the worship of a devotee ; with the same idealizing fervour as that which I had given to Adeline Dalrymple, and with more consciousness of myself. And she loved me. It was a thing that came at first sight on both sides, a sudden recognition of affinity for which neither was responsible and which neither could resist. We were made for each other. Each was the half which together made the completed human being.

And yet, what hope was there ? None ! Cordelia was a Roman Catholic, sincere, convinced, devout. And I was a Freethinker, a Deist, whose God was scarcely Providence so much as the Universal Mind ; a sociologist, unable to see society as other than a series of experiments, where even marriage, which



to her was a divine sacrament, was nothing but a human convention to be righteously dissolved if it failed its appointed end. /

To Cordelia all that I thought was fearful blasphemy; and it is a marvel to me now how her love withstood her horror. But the fact that it did lifts my feeling for her into a kind of divine gratitude, which keeps her ever in the place of my holiest and my best. In spite of her religious repugnance she loved me, the human being. She would not abandon me, and she clung to the hope of my conversion. Her director, too, was merciful, and suffered her to continue the understanding—which was not a distinct engagement—in the belief that I should be turned to the true faith by love. As I was still notoriously unanchored, denying more than I affirmed—and mere negation is supposed to be a kind of *Götterdämmerung* which only wants the presence of Freya to disperse and make

into living light—it was not impossible that love should work this reformation in me, as it had in others before me, and that I should come to my own happiness and make Cordelia's, as well as save my soul alive, by giving another convert to the Church which alone is the true Ark of Faith.

But, as I could not accept the foundation, the superstructure had never a chance. If Protestantism had been rejected for its unprovable assertions, what could I do with Catholicism, which makes larger demands on our faith and adds stone upon stone to the great temple of superstition? How could I speak of the Virgin Mary as *Deipara*?—take part in her Litany?—believe in her own Immaculate Conception?—call her ‘Mother of our Creator,’ and ask her to ‘deliver us from all dangers?’ I went to mass with Cordelia because she wished it, and I was with her. Had I

believed in hell, I would have gone there too, could I but have been with her. Ah! there could have been no hell where she was! Francesca da Rimini must have carried heaven with her had Paolo loved her as I loved Cordelia! And I let her chosen priests talk to me, because it was her wish; and also because I learnt more clearly what she thought through their teaching. But I was never stirred a hair's-breadth. Though I should lose all, I could not command belief in what seemed to me mere fables from end to end; and even against love I must be faithful to truth.

What argument was it to me, when Father Nolan spoke of authority and the long line of tradition, miracle and inspired counsel, which had remained unbroken in the Romish Church from the establishment of Christianity to now? Their traditions are not evidence; their miracles I disbelieved; and the Councils presided over

by a John XII., a Benedict IX., an Alexander VI., did not seem to me to carry with them strong assurance of divine inspiration. For unbroken succession of teaching—have not Indian jugglers also this? Does that make their juggling miraculous according to its seeming? Could all the authority of all the popes and cardinals that ever lived *prove* the truth of the Incarnation?—or manifest more than their own belief in it?—or reconcile stories which oppose the laws of nature and deny all that science teaches? Could authority and tradition harmonize impossibilities? or make the distinct assertion that this generation shall not pass away till such and such things be fulfilled, aught but a promise which failed to justify itself? Could any number of Councils, of the same Church which condemned Galileo, verify the standing still of the sun upon Gibeon and of the moon in the valley of Ajalon?—or the

going back of the shadow on the dial ten degrees for a sign of healing to Hezekiah? Who will keep the keeper? and who will verify the verifier?

The great cardinal who then ruled over the Romish Church in England—whose appointment had so fluttered the Protestant dovecote, and whose gigantic ‘guy’ I had seen not so long ago as the expression of that fluttering—he, like Father Nolan, found me impracticable; and what love for my darling could not win from me, arguments, flawed from the base upwards, could still less! For I loved her! I loved her!—how deeply, to my enduring sorrow I alone knew. I would have died for her as willingly as other men would have received their supreme honour. I would even have seen her married to another, if she had loved him and he had been worthy of her. I loved her beyond self, beyond jealousy, beyond passion itself. Her happiness was dearer to me than my

own; and to have known her blessed would have been more to me than any joy that could have befallen myself. I loved her till I sometimes felt as if my heart would break, as when something is overloaded—it may be with golden treasure; all the same, it is overloaded;—and it breaks. I loved her beyond life and fame and repute; and all that I had or desired of fortune was valuable only so far as it regarded her. I would have accepted a title only to give it to her; and wealth would have had no charm for me if I might not have shared it with her. I read her into the universe and saw all things as the reflex—the shadow—of her. But I could not lie—even for her!

When I parted from her it was absolutely as if my heart were taken from my body—as if my life were torn away physically. It was acute bodily suffering; and more than once I had to use conscious self-control not to shriek like a man in agony. Whenever

she left me it was no longer life, it was death—but death which retained the consciousness of pain. I would have made myself her helot, if that would have done her good. I would have sacrificed my whole position and have worked for her on the roads, in the mines, at the lowest and vilest occupations, if she would have gained thereby. Had she been stricken with leprosy, I would have taken her in my arms; had her breath carried with it death, I would have kissed her lips till I died. It was for no want of love. No man, living nor dead, in fact nor in fancy, ever loved with more wholeness of devotion than I. But the Truth, as I conceived it, was my Sacred Mother whom I must not betray. Let my heart break—let my life go down to ruin—let me lose all and stand a beggar and an outcast instead of the glad possessor of love and happiness—let me sit for ever among the ashes and live to the end in the black

midnight—but I must not lie; and I could not! And had I still to make the choice, I would rather commit personal suicide than, even for Cordelia, stand up in the market-place and say ‘I believe’ what I hold to be a fable.

On her side she was as firm as I was on mine, as passionately convinced of the truth of her creed as I was of its falsehood. She had no alternative but to refuse to marry me. How else could she have acted? She believed with the intensest fervour of conviction all that I rejected with the vehemence of denial. It would have been sacrilege to *her* Mother, the Church, and blasphemy to God, had she married me, unbeliever as I was. Indeed, her Church would not have sanctioned our union, nor could any priest have been found who would have given us the blessing. And to her—a simply civil ceremony would have made her, not my wife, but my concubine.



‘If only you would believe!’ she used to say to me with tears in her beautiful eyes. Oh, those eyes! they haunt me still! those tears in them, which were like blood drawn from my very heart! And yet both truth and honour forbade me to dry them. My heart! my heart! how was it that you did not break?

One day she laid her hand on my arm.

‘Become simply a believer in the Divine Incarnation,’ she said. ‘Be a Christian of any denomination, and I will get the consent of the Church to marry you. But how can I be the wife of one who disbelieves in the Divinity of the Saviour?—who rejects the message of love and the means of reconciliation sent to a fallen world by God through Christ? How could I ever say my prayers again, after having committed such a deadly sin? and who would give me absolution while I went on living in it?’

And what could I say but repeat the old sad cry?—

‘I cannot believe, and I cannot lie, even for you!’

But almost worse than my theological unbelief was my moral unsoundness; and specially on that marriage question. There seemed in this a certain kind of personal contamination which touched her own purity. My want of belief in the sacramental quality of marriage seemed to rob it of all sanctity, and to make it—on my side, at least—nothing better than a veiled and decent sin.

‘What security,’ she once asked, ‘have men or women with wives or husbands who think as you do? If marriage is merely a civil contract, dissoluble at pleasure—a social convenience without intrinsic sacredness—what security is there? Yourself, Christopher—if I have no stronger hold on you than your fancy—is that inalienable? We

all know that people change. How could I be sure you would not ?'

It was in vain I pleaded the worth of a man's word and the security lying in a steadfast nature. I had never yet proved false to an affection nor a principle ; and speculative opinions have nothing to do with practical honour nor living conduct. Because I thought marriage a civil contract and not a divine ordinance—because I would give relief to those who had made a mistaken choice—that did not imply I would change in my love for her, nor fail in my fidelity. Was no reliance to be placed on the proof afforded by the past ? Was the whole run and set of a character valueless as evidence ?

She shook her head when I spoke to her like this.

'The only safeguard of conduct is religious principle,' she said. 'Outside belief in God and His commands there is no security—no sacredness !'

We soon ceased to discuss the question of the sacramental or experimental character of marriage. It was too painful for her to hear; and I understood her sensitiveness. And I loved her for it; as I loved all that was hers, how much soever opposed to myself, because of the saintly purity and the saintly constancy with which she held to her convictions. If I could have changed her and made her a Freethinker, like myself, I would. As I could not, I loved her for what she was. But this marriage matter was the colouring thread that ran through the whole web of our mourning. And though after a time we left off open controversy, as being worse than useless, I knew what she felt; and she knew that I had not changed. She held fast by her points of faith and I by mine of denial; and there was no middle term where we could meet.

Year after year we went on in the old

ways, and time brought us no nearer to a settlement than we were at the beginning. She did not give me up. She had always the pious believer's faith in the power of God to work a miracle in my behalf, and in His goodness to turn my soul from the darkness to the light. I, on my side, prayed earnestly for better guidance. I besought the Power who overshadowed and influenced all life to be shown my wrong, if I were in the wrong ; to be convinced of error if I were wandering and astray. Passionate, extreme, thorough, I would have submitted to any public humiliation had I been convinced of the truth, as Cordelia saw it, and of my own error, as she believed it. No recantation would have been too complete—no penitent reconciliation to God too humble. I would have devoted my life to the service of the Church I had slandered. And had it been the Mother's will, and Cordelia's, I

would have foregone all personal benefit from my conversion, and would have gone into a monastery to expiate my former sins instead of to the marriage altar to profit by my present grace.

But no light, if light it were, came to me. The whole thing still continued to be a mass of beautiful but unreal superstition. And the idea that the Great Incommunicable Spirit beyond and above all sense had ever been localized and individualized was more and more to me the outcome of that ignorance which made the earth the cosmic centre—the outcome of that vanity which supposes man to be the supreme object of divine thought and care.

But we loved each other. Deeper than all faiths, stronger than all doubts, lay that deathless love of which irreconcilable principle was just strong enough to prevent the translation into deeds. It was not able to kill the spirit! Oh! those long years

of ever-increasing denial of those things which it was my life's happiness to affirm! —of ever-decreasing trust in the power of love to bridge over the gulf dividing us! It was like a long death-agony, where Hope and Fear stand by the watcher, now the one chanting a hymn with a smile, now the other wailing a threnody with a sob.

And the whole thing was such a contradiction; and yet it was inevitable! The ardent desire to benefit humanity, which is the very tap-root of my moral nature, urged me to combat everywhere the organized mental tyranny and debasing superstitious ignorance of the Church of Rome—that deadliest enemy to human progress which the modern world possesses. Yet the person for whom I would have died—for whose good I myself would have gone down into infamy—was a Roman Catholic, and from her faith drew half her moral beauty. From that very religion which I would have de-

stroyed, she got that supreme spiritual loveliness which bent me to worship her as something beyond the normal heights of humanity. She was like some faultless masterpiece turned out by misshapen workmen;—for never on earth lived a purer soul, a more conscientious, high-principled, faithful nature. If her land of departed souls be peopled with such as she, purgatory is an unnecessary halting-place, and hell would emphatically be empty!

For her dear sake, to this hour I have a strange feeling of tenderness for the Roman Catholic ritual—for all who worship in sincerity as she worshipped, love what she loved and believe in those to whom she prayed. The sweet faint lingering scent of incense in the churches recalls her pure and lovely image to my mind as clearly as when I saw her cross herself as she knelt, watching her in her prayers, and loving her all the more for the faith I could not share. And



I am not ashamed to confess that more than once in these later years, for all that has come and gone between now and then, I have wept like a child when I have heard the mass and seen the symbol which stood between me and this well-named 'servant of Christ.' Hating the system with the whole force of my intellect, I love the worship with that idealization of sentiment which is so pathetic in its impotence to influence the conduct.

My love for that best and holiest of women was like one of those ground-springs which are too deep to stop, yet are impossible to utilize ; but they always keep that one spot green where forget-me-nots grow and summer roses fall. I loved her as a man loves when life and death meet in mingled passion and despair—with heart and soul and adoration—with the kiss that was heaven and the tears that were torture—with all that I had of poetry, of sentiment, of aspiration, of

desire—with infinite yearning, with boundless reverence, with tenderness, with devotion, with trust and with faith—with all that is human LOVE in its fullest sense. But the Crucified Christ stood between us with the force of Death; and the Church was the angel with the drawn sword who drove us forth from Paradise. And so it must be, while I could not worship nor she deny.

Thus the thing continued for many weary years, and at the end of all our struggles and all our agony, we were just where we were on the first night when we had met and recognised our mutual fitness to our mutual sorrow! Only this difference was between now and then—Hope lay like a dead child between us, and youth had faded from both.

We still saw each other at intervals. Cordelia had taken the habit of calling me brother, and wished that I should call her sister. Sister Cordelia! No living human

sound has in it the music of this to me! Sister Cordelia—the heart of all beauty, the soul of all grace! The name seemed to keep us together in the invisible bond which we could neither break nor draw closer. And by this time society had accepted our relations as fraternal, and had ceased to busy itself about our future.

One day we were walking in the fields together. It was the early summer, or rather the late spring-time—that time when love has yet in it the eager stretch of future hope, and when nature reminds one of nothing so much as a bridal and a blush. How well I remember that day—the unstained blue sky; the dazzlingly white cumulus clouds hanging like milky fleeces in the upper air; the interpenetrating sense of freshness, of joy, of life that laughed, of love that had won, everywhere in creation save with her and me! And yet we were together. And to me, with my passionate temperament, the

presence of the beloved and the joy of the moment were so much!

The fields were full of flowers—here silvered with daisies ; there golden with buttercups and paler cowslips ; and here again delicately shaded with the pale purple of the cuckoo flower. The air was full of subtle scents from root and blade and leaf and flower ; from the teeming earth and the freshening water ; from invisible substances brought from afar, and mixing their unknown sweetness with those we know at home. It was full of yet more subtle music from the thousand unseen creatures which hummed and quivered and sang their songs to each other in words we could not understand, but the theme of which we knew by the interpretation of our own hearts. A lark was soaring overhead, and singing as it soared ; birds all along the hedgerows and from the trees were calling to their mates ; a couple of white butterflies were fluttering above

our heads—everywhere it was the same—happiness and love—life, happiness and love!

We sat down on a bank under the lee of a hedge, and close to the gate. I took from my pocket Moore's 'Lalla Rookh' and began to read aloud the 'Fire Worshipper.' She was fond of that poem, representing as it did both her faith and her country. And at all times she liked my reading to her, When I came to those lines in the first canto, beginning: 'Hadst thou been born a Persian maid,' something as real as a touch seemed to pass between us, and more than the spoken words had been said. My voice broke and I stopped, while she looked into my eyes with an expression in her own that was at once a prayer and a confession, an entreaty and a lament; then suddenly she turned her face to my shoulder and burst into tears.

'Why will you not come to me?' she

sobbed. 'How can you still deny Christ and crucify Him afresh? How can you reject me—who love you so tenderly?'

I cannot relate that scene; as little could I catalogue the death-throes of my favourite child. It was the last despairing effort to win me over that she made, the last time I had to endure the rack I had voluntarily prepared for myself. She was as little near to yielding to my prayer to marry me, despite all, as was ever Saint Agatha near to denying her Lord. And I could not forswear my truth, nor join in the ranks of those who worshipped idols and cherished fables as living facts.

We stood together and watched the last of all things fade away between us. And Death came up where Love had been, and settled down on our hearts for ever. The long agony of years culminated in one supreme hour of anguish; and when the evening came, all was over. I knew no

more than that she had left me—that she had gone with Father Nolan, who had seemed to come out of space to where we sat, and who had spoken to her words I scarcely understood, but words which she obeyed and which severed us for all time and eternity.

When I came back to life and the things of the earth and the senses, I was alone. The sky was overcast ; the night had come ; the hoarse cry of the goatsucker vibrated in the mournful air ; an owl hooted from the wall ; and the passing bell told of the death hour of some poor soul cut off from all its love. Christ and the Church were victorious ; and there were only two desolate hearts the more, and one ruined life, to add to the count of the martyrs made by Faith and Denial.

But, set on a pedestal unattainable by any other stands the image of this sacred woman in my heart. Whatever of grace

and glory others have, she had more. Perfect in purity, in goodness, with a conscience that was as firm as adamant and crystal clear; perfect in loyalty to her creed and in loyalty to love, irreconcilable as these were; full of the majesty of moral beauty, of the splendour of human virtue—she is unique and apart from all I have ever known. She is the enduring loss and the unhealed sorrow of my life; and when I die, her name will be the last on my lips as it is the first in my heart. Whatever loves I had before, or have had since, lie in her shadow. The aureole round her memory eclipses their noonday brightness. Were she to call to me to go to her, I would stride over the grave of my fortune and my fair fame, and I would go. Were she to hold out her hand to me, I would step down the golden stair into the abyss to take it. And I lost her for an idea—for an unprovable belief and an undemonstrable



negation. I lost her because I could not lie, nor could she. But if I saw the print of her foot in the sand to-day, I would kiss the mark, and the bitter dust would be like rose-leaves on my mouth.

Life was never the same to me after this. Something had gone from me which could never be replaced. I felt like one who has received some unseen and irreparable hurt which maims, but does not kill. I was not visibly disabled, but living was more difficult. My affections had lost their centre and I was unfocussed everywhere. I had to live without personal hope or love in my life, and with only work, humanity, and thought to fill up the void. It was a colourless kind of thing for one like myself, strong, impassioned, fully vitalized, unable to exist under the blight of passive melancholy, whose impatience of gloom made it necessary to kill his sorrow or be killed by it. But it had to be borne; and I

did what I could for the sake of self-respect, and to vindicate the claim of character and philosophy to give the power of endurance. For I have always said that resignation to the inevitable is a question of natural strength and not of religious principle. The endless despair and passionate insubmission of many sincerely pious Christians show that they do not 'forgive God' for having afflicted them; while those who have no belief in the direct and deliberate will of an All-good Father, take their courage in both hands and bravely bear that cross which no tears can remove.

For myself, I buried my sorrow out of sight, and flung myself more and more into active life. Cordelia was dead to me, but humanity was left alive, and still suffered. There was so much to be done for the world! And after all, what were my individual sorrows compared with those of the race? What we now call altruism

was then as much a fact under another name. And altruism is integral to my nature, born as it is of passionate sensation and keen imagination, by which I suffer in my own person and understand that others should feel as I have done.

‘Your vice of pity,’ said old Madame Möhl one day to me, reprovingly.

For all that it has cost me I would rather have this vice than the alternative virtue of indifference.

Meanwhile, great changes had taken place in the old home. All my sisters were married, and my brother Edwin was also married. His wife was somewhat older than he and well endowed. She was almost maternally fond of him; and in every way his lines had fallen in pleasant places. Hence he was off my mind, and I had neither duties nor regrets on his account.

My father was dead; and the three old homes had passed into the unsympathetic

hands of strangers. Mr. Grahame too was dead, and the new incumbent of St. Mark's belonged to the most exaggerated section of the Evangelical school. He was simply 'old priest writ large,' who had narrowed the universe down to his own microscopic point. He was the sworn enemy of science, literary breadth of view, freedom of speculative opinion, change in any direction; and the grossest superstitions of Rome—to him the Scarlet Woman of the Apocalypse—were run hard by his own.

Thus my relations with Eden were broken at the root, and I never now went down among the mountains which had seen my youthful struggles and my boyish despair, the first waking of my mind to doubt and my first experience of love and loss.



## CHAPTER VIII.

**M**Y personal happiness in its fullest sense was lost for ever. What these late years had taken from me could never be regained ; and the hope of my manhood, like the certainties of my youth, had gone down into the grave of those dead illusions which we bury one by one as we pass along the highway of life. I should never now be the conqueror of fate and the controller of circumstance, as I once used to believe—happy, successful, triumphant, by the very force of my will—the very vitality of my courage. Like the rest, I must bear the

cross rather than wear the crown; and no more than Prometheus could I free myself from the vulture at my heart. But, if joy had gone from me, I could still be faithful to the right as I had made it for myself; and I could always be strong.

And I could never become one of those anæmic worshippers of sorrow who are content to mope away their lives in sad-eyed dreams of 'what might have been, had things been different.' My life must ever be active and objective—before me, not behind. To lie down by the open grave of our dead hopes seems to me both cowardly and insane; for the forces which are not utilized become poisonous and destructive.

Like all of my character and temperament, at once resentful and compassionate, I was both a philanthropist and a fighter. I would have bound up the wounds with the Samaritan, but I would have broken the heads of the Priest and the Levite. And

the one action would have been as justifiable as the other. It has taken many years of much chastening to get this fighting blood toned down to moderation, and to dissolve my strong conceptions of the absolute into a more tolerant and a wider acceptance of the relative.

But in my youth and early manhood all this passion was in the harmonious ordering of things. Revolt was in the air; and public events had added fuel to the original fire of my temperament, and set the tow of my imagination ablaze. Many facts in living history had seemed to me like modern reproductions of the old time 'Acta Sanctorum' of liberty. Thus, while I was yet a boy, Frost had repeated for me the part of Camille Desmoulins, with that Newport gaol for a minor Bastille and Henry Vincent as a translated and anachronistic Hampden. The Rebecca riots had been a righteous Jacquerie; the trial of each leader in those

riots had been the ostracism of a true Aristides—the punishment of nobleness because noble; and I firmly believed that Sir James Graham, when he opened Mazzini's letters, was the paid and authorized spy of that House of Hapsburg of which, as of our own Stuarts, no evil was too great to be believed. My old idol, King Dan—the modern Gracchus who had embodied all the praises lavished on Grattan by Byron in the 'Irish Avatar'—had died, like the worn-out wounded old lion my fancy had depicted him. Broken in health, enfeebled in mind, pitifully repentant of faults which had sprung from the grand and glorious vitality of his nature, he had sighed out his last breath in the bosom of his Mother in Rome; but, if he had gone, Ireland still lived, and her wounds were yet unhealed and bleeding. And when the *United Irishman* preached its gospel to young Ireland, and Smith O'Brien, Meagher



and Mitchell came to the front like new Emmetts and Fitzgeralds—I too contributed my small brick to the building of the temple, and felt twice the man I was before.

I had seen the Chartist movement quenched in its original form; but the Corn Law League and the Reform Bill had already given us more solid gains than my poor friends and brothers could have granted had they even had their will. I had seen the French Republic proclaimed, and I had believed in the formula, ‘Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité,’ as a new gospel against which the gates of hell itself would not prevail; and I had seen the murdered corpse of this fair hope lying beneath the heel of Louis Napoleon, and the empire established on the basis of perjury and murder. I had witnessed the trial of Orsini, noted the care he took of his long white finely shaped hands—even there in the dock—and I had

thought, between the two it was a pity this one had been the victim! So that the 'Sturm und Drang' period of my own life had been in a manner repeated, as well as justified, by public events; and, as I say, revolt and excitement had been in the air all round.

Now things were modifying; and my own thoughts, like politics, were taking a new and more practical shape.

The miserable condition of the poor; the injustice of existing arrangements, both in the tenure of the land and in the relations between labour and capital; the need of 'levelling up'—of inculcating greater self-respect among the masses by improved education, by increased political responsibilities, by better material conditions in food and dwelling—these were the subjects which now sat nearest to my heart. They made the more mature phase into which had passed that crude academic ideal of

Liberty with sword and banner, wild hair and floating plumes, crying, 'Death to the Tyrants!' on the ramparts, and shouting the 'Song of the Greeks' to the winds, which had been my dream in the boyish days of romance. This kind of thing had gone for ever; and I had come to the knowledge that reforms, to be lasting, must be legal, and that true liberty comes by the slower process of growth and gradual fitness, rather than by the sudden leap into supreme power of men unused to responsibilities and incapable of self-government. To be sure, armed revolution has been, and still is, necessary where supreme power is backed by the army, where abuses are maintained by the law and peaceable reforms are impossible. Then there is nothing for it but a hand-to-hand fight for the freedom of the many against the tyranny of the few; and the sacred right of insurrection cannot be proclaimed too loudly nor too loyally upheld.

But under a constitutional government, where liberty of speech, association and remonstrance is already won, armed rebellion is unnecessary; and bit by bit reform, so loftily despised by heady youth, manhood learns to respect as the only revolutionizing method fit for rational people.

‘Ohne Hast, ohne Rast’ is the best motto for the political reformer. But there must be that ‘ohne Rast;’ and the nuisance to be carted away must not be left to obstruct the highroad.

Thus, making a wide leap onward, the Education Bill was a better measure than would have been the Chartist demand for the payment of members, whereby working men, who did not know their real needs nor the best way of supplying them, might sit in the House and put back their own cause by ignorance and unpracticality. And again, limitation of a proprietor’s power over the land, and the enforcement

of the doctrine of duties as a substitute for that of rights—so that he shall not be able to evict whole villages at his pleasure, nor to convert arable land into deer-forests because these let better than fields and farms, and shall be forced to build and maintain labourers' cottages on his estate, at convenient distances from the centres of work ; limitation of the acreage to be held by individuals ; abolition of plurality in estates as in ecclesiastical holdings—of the law of entail and of the power of willing away property, so that a man shall never more be able to disinherit his wife and children, thus carrying his enmity beyond the grave—all these would be wiser as first steps and thin edges, than sudden nationalization, even with so many years' purchase as the solatium. And these things have to come. They too, are in the air ; as is limitation of the powers and a change in the processes of the House of Lords

—to be obtained peaceably but inexorably.

Violence, the ugly side of reaction against wrong, is the enemy which we Liberals and iconoclasts have to contend with in ourselves. It has already done as much to retard the birth-hour of true liberty as have both Russia and Rome. Where the gospel of the knife, of dynamite, of the guillotine is preached, there liberty loses, and by just so much wrong and oppression gain. Threats are of no use unless they can be carried out ; and the attack which does not frighten and subdue irritates instead. The salvation of society will come only from that kind of philosophic and scientific Radicalism which sets itself to mend the evil of things, not by cataclysms and coups-d'état, but by the gradual education of public opinion, by orderly organizations, by the exposition of causes, keeping free of personal rancour, and by the steady and

sustained pressure of argument, rather than by appeals to the passions or even the emotions of the multitude.

This would have been the work of the Positivists, had Dr. Congreve's social formula been wider and freer. He missed a noble opportunity, by which, however, the other section has profited. Yet, in spite of the perfect truth in part of the teaching of this other section—in spite of all Frederic Harrison's eloquence and glorious humanity—the world refuses to go over. Positivism, as given in the beginning, was too truly 'Catholicism without Christianity'—that is, mental subjection without spiritual consolation; arrested development without the beauty, the poetry, the finer fancies by which the elder sister gratifies the dwarfed intelligence of those for whom the last word has been said, the final revelation given, the finishing touch laid. Scientific reform—

philosophic democracy—are what the world wants ; remembering that science includes the element of growth and the possibility of mutation, and that life is perpetual flux and interchange of force and form.

Anything that made for liberty was sure of my poor support. I sympathized with all the movements afloat, and knew something of them all as they rose and swam, then sank and were lost in the depths of completed things. The Christian Socialists, with their brave leader, Parson Lot, at their head, spinning golden webs which drifted away into nothingness, fastened as they were to nothing more solid than the mere poetry of Christianity—the Republican formula canonized:—The Secularists whose very name frightened respectable folk, though they were so dry and formal and severely moral, and whose blameless chief stood as a kind of diabolic Demiurge who would create a Pandemonium where had



been an Eden, though now he is looked on as a fossilized **kind** of Conservative by his successors and **overtakers**:—The dreamy and unpractical **Republicans**, whose ‘organ’ was printed down among the mountains, with no public to buy it when done, and with only the ruin of the enthusiast who manipulated the whole matter as the net result:—The eloquent, if not quite satisfactory, Unitarian who preached on Bentham and the Holy Spirit—poetry to-day, and free-trade to-morrow—and who, utilitarian from head to heel, ‘would bless a river for its beauty, and bid it turn a mill’:—Kossuth, Mazzini, Garibaldi, Victor Hugo—the men who had written words which burned the hearts of those who read them, and the men who had fought behind the barricades as their practical commentary thereon:—The French who had escaped Cayenne, and who cursed the Man of December:—The Russians who had escaped Siberia, and who cursed

the Czar :—The Hungarians and Poles, the Lombards and Venetians, who had put Spielberg and I Piombi behind them, and who swore vengeance to the House of Hapsburg, like so many Archangel Michaels against Satan :—The Italians who had fled from the Neapolitan dungeons and the Papal prisons :—The new Luther and the modern Tell :—The unsuccessful conspirators of all nations—I knew them all. And I believed in some, while I confess I gravely doubted the sincerity of others.

For though exile was a bad business, say for those Sicilian gentlemen and noblemen who sacrificed place and fortune for the rational liberties of their country, it was a means of living, like any other, for those shady patriots who were less martyrs than adventurers, and whose politics were a profession rather than a principle. And even among the best of the sincere—always excepting such men as the Scalias and their

friends—there was a notable absence of good sense and workable methods, and a great deal of childish noise and bluster.

I did my best, however;—myself not being exactly qualified to sit in the seat of the judge condemning exaggeration; and I gave both my strength and my substance to the cause of freedom in general. I was still hopeful enough to believe that we were on the threshold of a new development, at the fork of a new departure. The echo of the high hopes with which we, the young men of that time, had greeted the establishment of the first International Exhibition, that precursor of universal peace, still lingered in the air, and turned to noble music every little scannel pipe that squeaked. We looked to all four corners of the earth for deliverance from the social and economic ills which oppressed our poorer brethren; and our Saviours of Society were as many as there were ingenious men to draw out a pro-

gramme and bold ones to take the initiative.

Our belief was, in a sense, omnivorous, and adapted all that came as food. Schemes for the regeneration of the world strewn the ground like golden dust, and Vidocq himself could not have gathered up all the ends which formed the tangled skein of our hopes. But I can never be sufficiently grateful for the small grain of caution, which lies like a two-pennyworth of common-sense in the midst of the intolerable quantity of impulse with which I am handicapped, that I forebore to join any association, and refused to become a member of any of the secret societies by which I was surrounded and solicited.

What a crowd of memories surge around me as I write! Kossuth's triumphal entry into London, matched for enthusiasm only by that of Garibaldi's still grander apotheosis some years after:—The assault on

Haynau by the sturdy brewers who represented the presence among them of the woman-flogger:—and our own piano-wires in Jamaica vibrating in the near distance ! That crowded meeting at St. Martin's Hall, where Kossuth and Mazzini sat on the platform—the one so showy, so brilliant, so like the hero of romance, the other shy, reserved, silent, intense—the one phosphorescent, the other hidden fire :—The establishment of the Whittington Club, which was to be the beginning of all social good and the grand refining influence and 'leveller up' of the 'second set,' where ladies were to dance with shopmen, and gentlemen were to squire, but not flirt with shopwomen :—The great lights of the literary world, Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, Grote, Tennyson, Mills, the Brownings—in his own degree, Arthur Helps—George Henry Lewes, Miss Martineau, 'Jane Eyre' and Mrs. Gaskell, together with

Thackeray and Dickens:—all are heaped up in my mind without order or chronology; and I could not without some trouble lay these memories in line nor arrange them in their sequence. I only remember the seething time that it all was, and the hope which was born into the world, to be extinguished by fear—even as that divine child, lying in a blaze of light in the cradle, was killed by the frightened nurse as a thing of horror, not cherished as a gift of glory.

Other things come before me as I write. I remember the evening when news of the Czar's death flashed into London. To me it was the forerunner of peace and the redemption of thousands of lives through the loss of one. Therefore it was a thing rightfully welcome to England. Yet Nicholas was a man of whom his worst enemies must speak with respect for his person, how much soever they may hate the system of which he was the crowning

symbol. I was in a state of boiling excitement and could not remain at home, but dashed out in a hansom, I did not care where. I remember driving round Regent's Park in the aimless way of simple emotion trying to work itself off; and then I went to the house of some pleasant friends, with whom I was accustomed to spend many of my evenings. I thought they would sympathize with my exultation, and share in my rejoicing over the probable speedy settlement of the war; and I bounded up the stairs, two steps at a time, bursting into the room like a whirlwind raised by laughter.

I found the wife pale and in tears; the young people sitting about in mute, desponding, half-terrified distress; the husband pacing the room in the violent agonies of despair. What did it all mean? I was aghast, and not the less so when the sweet wife sobbed out:

‘We are ruined, Crishna! My dear, we are absolutely and eternally ruined!’

Mr. Smith was on the Stock Exchange. He had speculated for a fall; and the sudden death of the Czar had sent all investments up like so many balloons, and swept away his last penny. .

This was the first time that I had come face to face with the sorrow of private loss through public gain ; and it made an indelible impression on me. Natural as was this despair of the ruined individual, in face of the general and national good it seemed to me so strangely unpatriotic, so fatally egotistic !

Another strange experience, but before this time, was my introduction to the Queen’s Bench Prison. Some friends had got into trouble and were there—the husband as the debtor, the wife as the nurse, admitted on a doctor’s certificate. We had a good time, as the Americans say, in that meagrely fur-



nished dingy room, where the height of good company assembled. That handsome Irish notability—I wonder if he remembers those charming little early suppers, where the Sicilian dressed the macaroni, the Frenchman mixed the salad, the nurse-wife supplied the Attic salt, and where we were all as gay as larks?

Among the debtors of that time was a man who had taken his wife's unsecured fortune and lavished it on the famous Phryne of the day. He drifted into the Queen's Bench as the moral of his fable; and his wife, with her little child, came daily to see and comfort him. I always thought this one of the finest instances of womanly forgiveness I had ever met with; and I very much question whether this limp-backed Anthony were worthy of so much consideration from his patient Octavia.

I used to take my caged friends sauces and groceries, and was stopped at the gate,

while the turnkeys drew the corks of the Lazenbys and Burgesses, to make sure that nothing less innocent than Harvey or ketchup was in the bottles. We sat on the bed and boxes at our symposia, chairs being deficient; and some of the merriest and wittiest hours of my life were spent in that queer little room, '10 in 12,' as it was numbered. Perhaps it was somewhat too much of a 'danse Macabre'; and the ebullient gaiety of all concerned might have had in it a certain false ring, as of those who wished to forget and endeavoured to hide.

But we were all too well-bred to hint at the skeleton; and indeed some of us did not see the grinning skull beneath the roses. For the world is so blind!—and of all qualities extant, perspicuity is the rarest. So we all went with pretty constant fidelity to visit the Government debtor and his nurse-wife; and gaiety turned into a play what had been assigned as a penance, till the

beneficent hand of patronage did its work, and the authorities came to a compromise which opened the cage-door and set the captives free.





## CHAPTER IX.

**I** HAVE not yet spoken of Morton Cavanagh, for all that he had been for a long time my best and dearest friend. I became acquainted with him during the second year of my life in London, and we made friends on the spot. There was just this little strangeness in our sudden friendship, in that it was made as it were in spite of ourselves. We had been mutually prejudiced against each other by excessive praise. His friends had vaunted him to me so extravagantly that I had made myself sure he was nothing but an overrated and conceited puppy—a jack-

daw pranked in peacock's feathers, and by no means the phoenix they had painted him. He on his side had come to an analogous conclusion about me. I was a pedant, a bookworm, a dusty, fusty, old-young prig; and my diligence was a red rag to him as violent and aggressive as was his brilliancy to me.

Hence, when we met, we met as secret enemies determined to hate each other to the death; and when we parted, we parted as mutual friends who knew that they would love each other for life. It was an odd little drama; but all life is full of these queer contradictions of intent and deed.

Cavanagh was one of the handsomest young fellows I have ever seen. He was bright, energetic, gallant; a creature whom all women loved, to whom all men wished well, and of whom there were as many hopes as there are stars in the sky. And he seemed certain to justify the brilliant pro-

phacies made in his favour. He had the ball at his foot, and the world's oyster was already half opened. He was an artist, and, so far as he had gone, a successful one. He had taken the Gold Medal, been publicly praised by Sir Charles Eastlake, and he had sold his first exhibited picture. All that was wanting now was diligence in work and industry in self-improvement.

For the first few years his sun shone in a cloudless sky. While I was making but a very moderate income by hard work, Cavanagh was coining money by labour as light as play. His gains were princely, all things considered; and he ought to have saved considerably. But no matter what he earned, he kept nothing. Generous, careless, pleasure-loving, extravagant, he had every quality which leads to expenditure and the melting-pot; and with all his gains he never had sixpence before him. Or, if he had, it was taken from him by some-

one who said he wanted it more than did he himself. Cavanagh had not yet learned how to refuse. 'No' was the hardest word in the language to him, and he would have borne any burden on his own shoulders rather than have given pain to another. As for his openhandedness, it did not matter, he used to say with a laugh. He had a reserve fund where that came from, and his bank was not broken. While he had health and strength he would float on the top of the waves; when he felt himself beginning to sink it would then be time enough to put together a raft and hang on to a buoy.

Although we were more like brothers than merely friends, Cavanagh and I had little mental life in common. He did not care a straw for politics; social questions were dry chaff to him; he never troubled his head about religion. He went to church when he visited his people in the country, because it was the proper thing to do and

they would have been hurt had he not gone; but he dropped the habit in London. Not because he did not believe what he heard from reading-desk or pulpit; but because it took up his time and bored him. He liked the sunshine and long rambles in the woods and fields and by the sea-shore better than the dim religious light; and, if remonstrated with, he used to say that Nature was his temple, and a lark singing in the sky was a more devout choir than one made up of any number of nice little boys in nice white stoles, singing antiphonies through their noses. But what was wanting in mental sympathy of the deepest kind was filled in by sympathy of a more generalized sort. We both loved art and nature, music, poetry and beauty. We both loathed vulgarity, and never confounded unconventionality with coarseness nor freedom with vice. And we both profited by the devotion, sincerity and affectionateness which inter-



penetrated and coloured the character of each.

For my own part, I had reason enough to both love and admire Morton Cavanagh. He was a charming companion ; always ready to enjoy ; bright, good-humoured ; at once receptive and expansive, playful and sincere. He was entirely natural too—one of the least artificial or self-conscious of men. He was conscious enough of the splendour of life and of his own divine enjoyment therein—conscious of power and pleasure, of what he could do and what he could feel—but he was not conscious of his outer self. He scarcely knew that he was handsome—he, who was as beautiful as Antinous!—and he never calculated on the effect of his personality on others. Perfectly truthful, he did not offend the most susceptible, because what he said was said without either callousness or insolence. It was said simply because such

and such things were. Is it an offence to call the hedge wound-wort fetid? or flattery to say that the rose is sweet? This truthfulness was part of Cavanagh's very being. Subterfuge, lying, hypocrisy, all false seeming everywhere, were as far from him as was cruelty or vulgarity; and part of his very manliness was in his sincerity.

In person he was tall, slender, long-limbed. He had dark hair and dark eyes; his skin was dead white, and his whole appearance was un-English. But his beauty was neither French nor Italian, nor yet Spanish, nor again that of any nation with which I am acquainted. It was *sui generis*. He himself used to declare that he was half a Red Indian, because descended through his mother from the hapless Queen Pocohontas; and he certainly had a curiously long swift stride, and bore himself with a certain savage ease and grace as well as dignity and freedom, which justified his be-

lief. Only, one learns to be somewhat sceptical of these descendants of Pocohontas ; they are a little too numerous. Be that, however, as it may, I have never seen anyone like Cavanagh—never one with so much native kingliness of manner mingled with the gallant gay good-humour of an artist and a Bohemian. For he was a Bohemian to his finger-tips—but not of the vicious type.

Such as he was, he was supreme in beauty, in talent, in nobleness, in brilliancy and power ; and not the proudest of us all felt that he doffed his cap too low, or gave up his own rightful pretensions, when he made Morton Cavanagh the king of the circle whom all agreed to honour and none could fail to love.

When I went over to Paris, I naturally lost personal touch of my friend. We corresponded, of course ; but letters are poor substitutes for daily intercourse, and when lives are apart interests diverge. Then

there comes of necessity a certain mildew about the intimacy—not in the affections, but in the mutual knowledge of events. And all events more or less mould and modify the character, until it finally sets in its inalterable shape ; when it fossilizes and grows no more.

One day while I was in Paris I received a letter from Cavanagh telling me abruptly that he was married. He had married, he said, the daughter of a lodging-house keeper down at some place in Cornwall—I think it was Bude or Boscastle—where he had been spending the summer. He made no attempt to conceal the real position of his wife, nor to gild the homely russet of her circumstances. She was simply plain Mary, the daughter of a woman who took in lodgers for the summer season in a simple little Cornish village. But she was a good girl, he said, and as beautiful as an artist's wife should be. He was as happy as a king, he

went on to say, and he wanted only his dear Chris—his *fidus Achates*—to be as happy as an emperor.

It was a letter written in the wildest, maddest strain ; and I was glad that he was so content. As for a lodging-house keeper's daughter—well ! the name does not go for much ; for there are daughters and daughters, as well as there are lodging-house keepers and lodging-house keepers. We sometimes find irreproachable ladies of good education and small means who pay their rent by letting their rooms. There is nothing necessarily degrading in this. A woman left poorly provided for, and with children to bring up, must do something to stretch that narrow margin. Why not this as well as anything else ? Mary's mother was surely a lady of this kind ; and Mary herself was none the worse for the fact that the drawing-rooms had to pay the rent, and that a six months' letting had to secure a

twelvemonths' tenement. She must be refined and well brought up. Morton Cavanagh could not have married anything else than a real, true, genuine, unapocryphal gentlewoman. With his fastidious tastes, how could he do otherwise? The only thing to disturb me in the matter was that he had not told me of his engagement, and that he had sprung his marriage on me so unexpectedly. But I loved my friend and respected freedom of action too much to allow this to rankle in my mind; and I made no stumbling-block where Cavanagh had placed none.

When I returned from Paris, Cavanagh came to meet me at the station. I saw him striding up the platform with his old swift silent step, his handsome face alight with pleasure, his bright eyes shining in the gas-light as in an instant he had, as he said, 'spotted' me. But when I stood face to face with him, at a glance I saw a certain change.

I could not explain it. I could not say where it was, nor in what special tract nor trait. But it was there. It was the same picture varnished with another colour ; and the man I met was not the man I had left. He was stouter than when I had seen him last. The clear white of his skin was obscured and yellowed. His jet-black hair was longer, and the gloss had gone out of it. His dress was shabby, and he had a certain self-neglected look—a certain dash of raffishness which he had never had before ; and as he spoke and laughed his welcome in more vociferous fashion than had been usual with him, his hot breath was heavy with the deadly reek of gin.

When I went to his lodgings I understood matters yet more clearly. A tawdry, ill-appointed young woman, with a by no means appetizing infant in her arms—a young woman with a face like a wax-doll, pink and blue and gold, round and

mindless, with nothing in it save youth and colour, and from which maternity had already taken the first bloom—a young woman, fine and slipshod, under-bred and pretentious, ill at ease and affected—this was the landlady's daughter whom my friend had made his wife, and vaunted as his fitting match and willing choice.

My poor Cavanagh ! What had blinded him so fatally ? Ah ! it was the old old story whereby so many young men have been destroyed—a moment's weakness, and a life's sad ruin for expiation ! That was the whole thing. When the momentary craze passed, my friend woke to find himself tied for life to an animated log, in no single particular admirable nor worthy of him. I do not mean to say she was actively bad, poor soul !—she was not that ; but she was utterly common—not vicious, but unimprovable—not a savage, nor a fiend, nor yet even a mere animal, but just a human



doll, mindless, brainless, conscienceless, and worked by curious internal machinery. And she was the millstone round her husband's neck which sank him to the depths.

The sequel is soon told. Disgusted with himself, and not strong enough to bear with patient dignity the consequences of his own mistake nor yet able to remedy that mistake, Cavanagh took to drink, as many a poor fellow has done before him. Neither the claims of his wife and children nor the religion of honour and self-respect, touched him for more than a few days at a time. He had spasmodic fits of repentance, of self-loathing, of good resolve, of refuge in religion, but to no good. The demon of drink had him too tightly in his grasp; and, struggle as he would, my unhappy friend could never set himself free. His wife did not know how to take him. How should she, poor woman? Such a character and such conditions as his required nicer handling

than hers. She bullied him, rated, threatened, and publicly disgraced him yet more than he had already disgraced himself. She made his wretched squalid home more wretched by her not unnatural temper, and more squalid by her bad management and unthrift; and he left both her and it for that bitter forgetfulness which only made everything worse.

He grew quarrelsome, too, and suspicious; and it was as much as I or any of his friends could do to keep on fair terms with him, so madly determined was he to find us in the wrong. Poor Cavanagh! Having so much to condemn in himself, it would have been such a relief if he could have found that he was not the only one to blame, and that his griefs against others excused his high-treason against himself! But I never let him quarrel with me. And, painful as it was to go to that sordid home and see the wreck of all that I had once so loved, admired and be-

lieved in, I used to go continually—to at least ease my own conscience if I could not lighten his.

Suddenly the whole family disappeared out of London, and I lost sight of them. Cavanagh did not write to me, and his own people refused to give me his address. He had gone like a faded aurora—something that had been so glorious and that now had passed into the mists of night. No one of our common friends knew more than I; and I knew nothing. So it continued for some time, and of this man who had been to me more like a brother than a friend I knew absolutely nothing—not even whether he were living or dead, sane or mad. And I could not find out.

One night I had a singular dream. I thought that I was walking on the road which led to our old rectory when I stumbled over the body of Morton Cavanagh, lying half-dead and covered with mud by the way-

side. I stopped, lifted him up in my arms, and cleansed him; then I led him home, hand-in-hand, to my father's house—waking as I passed through the garden gate.

This dream made a deep impression on me, for all that, I am absolutely free from superstitious belief in, or reverence for, dreams. Still, it brought my dear friend's image so vividly before me that I could not free my mind from the thought of him. And I resolved at all costs to find out where he was, and in what condition of mind, body and estate.

After infinite trouble and queer, mole-like workings, I succeeded. I found him in a small four-roomed cottage, in a remote village in Essex—separated from his wife and children, and living with a policeman and his wife. His family had taken him in hand, and, as he was now an absolute pauper, they were masters of the situation. The wife and children were cared for se-

parately; and Cavanagh was, as I say, put under the charge of a policeman, with strict orders that he should be kept from drink. He had had delirium tremens more than once, and his brain was by now decidedly deteriorated.

When I knew his address, I went down that same day. I wanted to take him un-awares, and thus to be able to judge more accurately than if he had time to prepare himself.

I shall never forget the sickening sensation of the moment when I first saw him in that wretched cottage, amid those gross and mean surroundings that made the reality to which his brilliant prospects had declined. Bloated, blotched—his once bright eyes lustreless, bloodshot, staring—his manner a strange mixture of swagger and shame—his manhood degraded—his whole being debased—and yet flashes of his old purer self traversing this deadly darkness—he was

more awful than a galvanized corpse, more pitiful than a ghost lingering mournfully among the living. What a change! what an awful fall it was!

At the first moment he did not seem to recognise me. Then, when he did, he laughed aloud with that false mirth which is more sad than tears. Then he became insolent, and challenged my motives for coming, and threatened me with tragic, half-insane and impotent bluster; and finally he broke down into hysterical weeping, which was a kind of waymark of his degradation. And then he was conquered; and a little of that deep crust of moral dirt was washed away, at least for the moment. I stayed with him the whole day, and we went out for a walk in the fields, where he got to be somewhat more like his old self. We talked of flowers and art, of pictures and people; but his brain was weak, and he could not take in much at a time, and I had to

treat him morally and intellectually as the famished are treated physically—with small spells of talk and long lapses of silence. But my presence seemed to soothe if not to strengthen him; and when I left he pressed me to go again, and often, and very soon; saying, as he stood on the platform, the policeman by his side:

‘You have done me good, Chris! God bless you, old fellow!’

I often went after this—generally once a week; but always by appointment. On the days when I was there he was at least safe from degradation; and, indeed, the woman of the house said they reckoned three good days for every visit. He was happy in my company. I recalled him to something of his former brightness, and for sake of the old times he made these pathetic little efforts to rise out of his ruin. But he could not. His brain had deteriorated, his will had been eaten

into, and his morale was paralyzed all through. The second day after I had been to see him, he broke out as bad as ever, and so he continued till the day before my next visit was to come off. Then he kept sober, for love's sake and mine.

How he got the means, or how he managed to get the drink at all, was a mystery. The only sure thing about it was, he did manage, and he did get it. He, once so honourable, so upright, so straightforward and fearless in the truth, now condescended to the meanest falsehoods and subterfuges for that accursed poison which had ruined him.

At last the end came. He died quite suddenly, in a moment, as he sat there by the table. And when he died he was a mere shell—a mass of used and worn-out organs, all of which were diseased and destroyed. His death was a release from sorrow shame, and suffering all round ; and



I felt that I had gained him again, not lost him, through the purification of the grave. My poor Cavanagh! I never loved any man, save Edwin, so much as I loved him ; but my dream was a lying vision :—I did not cleanse nor save him, nor did I lead him home to the Father's House !

I lost more than Morton Cavanagh about this time—the exact dates and precise order do not signify. My dear old father-friend Walter Savage Landor made the second great blunder of his life, and had to pay the penalty. The law is no respecter of persons ; and those who vault unbidden into the seat of justice have to suffer by the sword they have wielded without authority. ✓

Into the merits of this painful case I will not enter. All I know is the fatal result ; and the only defence I make—and to my mind it is all-powerful—is, that age obscures the clearness of the mental vision as it does that of the physical, and that if to those

who love much much may be forgiven, those whose vigorous youth has been pure and flawless may hope for the reverent veiling of oblivion when they make an octogenarian mistake.

Mr. Landor left Bath, and went back to his own family and the old home he once loved so well at beautiful Florence; and I never saw him again.

But the lives which had been discordant in the years gone by were not likely to be harmonious now; and the love which had been too weak to keep the marriage soldered in the days of youth and maturity could scarcely bring together the jagged edges in old age, when habits had diverged as much as feelings were estranged. After a miserable spell of dissatisfaction, the fire, which had long been burning low, finally burnt itself out, and the old lion lay down never more to rise. There, under the blue sky of Italy, turned to his rest one of the grandest

literary figures and noblest men of his generation — one who, though his own worst enemy, was the friend and panegyrist of all things lofty, beautiful and good.

Too absolutely free from the faintest taint of vulgarity to be appreciated by the vulgar, the inner beauty of Landor's nature was not all men's possession—just as his literary work itself is only for the chosen few, and has never been what is called popular. Sonorous in its melody, but not laboured nor artificial; suggestive, but not sketchy; giving the impression of a reserve-fund unexhausted and of latent force unused, but never of want of finish nor of neglected opportunity; never cloying, but never disappointing, his works are among the best of our literature and language. Nowhere else do we find such a mixture of grace and strength, of tenderness and power, of artistic skill and natural simplicity. The figures

which leave his hands are like the purest Greek statues. There is no violence in their tragedy, no affectation in their elegance, no simper in their beauty, no self-consciousness in their grace. Beneath the smooth surface of the marble the living man lies hidden. His Aphrodites wring the salt wave from their dripping tresses, and know that they have risen to life in the upper air and are the beloved of gods and mortals ; but they are large and free and noble, and art but reproduces what nature created. His Apollos stand secure in their strength, masters of the Chariot of the Sun, lords of life and beauty, who command and are obeyed. There is no posturizing, no effort ; and it is this chastened self-restraint in the midst of his creative activity—this grand command, both over his own thoughts and his material, while infusing life into his dead symbols, which makes Landor so Greek. He sees all beauty

and manipulates it to his will; but he never exaggerates and never loses control of his idea. He is the Pygmalion of literature, but his Galateas have always the grave beauty of statues, even while they move and speak. In his intensest love he is free from all trace of licentiousness or coarseness. His Dionysos never changes attributes with Silenus; and his Aphrodite is the Sea-born but never the Pandemos.

For himself, time has dissolved away all the little surface weaknesses—all the thin crust and pellicles of temper which once grew about the outer man, and has left the pure core like shining gold, free from stain and rust. We judge him by what he did and was—by that Ideal which rises from the grave of the dead and is the true man—truer than was he whose brain was influenced by his blood, and his blood by all material things, and whose best self got sometimes lost, clouded and mislaid, like

diamonds fallen from their setting, or pearls discoloured by age.

Things had happened in my own history which made it impossible for me to go to my dear old friend in the beginning of this last sad drama at Bath. Had I been able, I knew that I should have prevented much that took place. My influence over Mr. Landor had grown of late years. It was that of a respectful son who has on his side the clearer vision and brisker energies of youth, while always absolutely deferential and obedient.

It was of no use, however, to lament over the inevitable. I could not go to him; and so those miserable Dry Sticks were Faggoted, and the brave life went out without my hand on the one or my love around the other.

I had one satisfaction in the years that came after. When Forster wrote his mean and unsatisfactory 'Life of Landor,' I

reviewed it. Two days after the review appeared, I was at a dinner given by dear Shirley Brooks. Lord Houghton was there.

‘Have you seen Kirkland’s review of “Landor’s Life” by Forster?’ he asked Lord Houghton. ‘It is the neatest thing I know. He has taken the skin off him so—so,’ he added, making a movement as if tearing strips along his arm.

Of Forster—‘*de mortuis*’ notwithstanding—I can never speak in sufficiently strong terms of contempt. He was bully and toady in excelsis; and the way in which he harnessed himself to the chariot of every manifest conqueror who drove into the literary arena was as degrading as it was loathsome. More loathsome still was his want of loyalty to the man, dead, whose feet he had kissed while living. Landor had been his friend and benefactor—had given him the copyright of his works, and had trusted

him with that most sacred deposit, the story of his life. Forster repaid his munificence by emphasizing the weaknesses and faintly depicting the grand qualities of his friend from whom no more was to be expected, and whose last act of generosity had been performed. In like manner his 'Life of Dickens' is simply a vehicle for his own self-laudation—dwarfing all other friendships to aggrandize and augment his own. All through his career his one ruling principle of action was egotism and self-advantage ; and of the finer strains of honour he had not the faintest echo.

Another notable man died about this time—Dr. Elliotson—with whom also I had been brought into personal relations. I first knew him through the Maconochies, at the time when his income—so they told me—had dropped plumb from twelve to two thousand a year, as the tax levied on his belief in mesmerism. During his last



illness my own dear father had been brought up to London, and placed under Dr. Elliotson, whose prophylactic then was tar-water. Nothing, however, did or could arrest the progress of the deadly disease which was eating away my father's life ; but the friendship which had then been begun, and had afterwards fallen into abeyance, was renewed in later years, between Dr. Elliotson and myself. He was then a Freethinker, so far as Christianity was concerned—a devout believer in God and the spiritual nature of man but not an orthodox Christian ; and we had many long and interesting talks together, after the prescription had been written out and the state of the dear patient upstairs discussed between us in the room below. Years passed after my father's death before I met my friend again. When I did, he was old, broken, penniless and out of practice. A friend —

good be with him and all such!—had taken this wreck of former power and brilliancy, and cared for him as a son would care for a father. Among other changes which the years had worked was the old man's conversion to Christianity by spiritualism. I met him one night at Mrs. Milner Gibson's, and he came up to me as soon as he saw me enter the room. We talked together for some time, the burden of his speech being lamentations that he had ever said anything to strengthen my own want of orthodoxy, and beseechings to reconsider the question, and—as he had done—come over to Christianity by the way of spiritualism and messages from the dead. He died not very long after this ; but his true self had died long before.

George Cruikshank too, was among the labourers on the ungrateful field of my mind. One evening we had been to Westland Marston's, and we walked home to-

gether. On the way we passed a group of rowdy drunken men and women. Suddenly George stopped, and, taking hold of my arm, said solemnly :

‘ *You* are responsible for those poor wretches.’

I answered that I did not exactly see this and disclaimed any share in their degradation. But he insisted on it ; and hung those ruined souls like infernal bells about my neck, tinkling out my own damnation, because at supper I had drunk a glass of champagne from which he had vainly tried to dissuade me.

He got heated and excited when I would not have what he called enough grace of conscience to recognise my responsibility in the drunkenness of these poor sinners. But we did not quarrel. Sincerity is far too valuable a quality to be resented, even when unduly aggressive ; and the good old fellow had so many fine and sterling moral beau-